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Men of the Kingdom

Girolamo Savonarola

A Prophet of Righteousness

By

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To My Wife

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"We will praise the hero-priest . . . who wears out, in toil, calumny, contradiction, a noble life, to make a God's Kingdom of this earth. The earth will not become too godlike." —*Carlyle.*

PREFACE

It was some years ago that I began the serious study of the life and character of Savonarola. Since then I have been on the alert to read whatever would throw light on the man, or show more clearly the meaning and value of his work. In the present volume no attempt has been made at comprehensive biographical study. This would have required much more space than has been placed at my disposal. It has been my purpose rather, keeping in mind the general aim of the series of which this volume is a part, to show what Savonarola was as a man, and what he did as a true prophet of righteousness. In doing this, I have described the times in which he lived and the men with whom he associated only so far as was necessary to make clear the meaning of what he spoke and what he wrought.

While recognizing that Savonarola had his limitations, decided limitations at some points, as will appear in the description of what he did or failed to do in important crises, I conceive of him as a man of unusually strong and striking personality; a man of scholarly abilities and attainments; a statesman of no mean order; a man of marked qualities of leadership; a rare spiritual nature; but

above all a great Christian hero, a man of God; a strong, brave, fearless prophet of righteousness. The story of his life and work is here presented with the hope that the reader may find in it new courage for the work to which God has called him.

Like all others who have written on this theme within the past quarter of a century, I must confess my indebtedness to the monumental work of *Pasquale Villari,* from which I have taken most of the extracts of sermons and letters which appear throughout the volume, though in many instances these have been carefully verified. It will be noticed that I have quoted frequently, and sometimes at length, from the sermons and other writings of Savonarola. This has been done with a purpose. The biography which means most to me personally is the one in which I hear the man's own voice, or read the words he himself penned. I am taking it for granted that my readers are like me in this respect. So instead of describing what Savonarola said, I have, whenever possible, let him say it.

To guard against a one-sided or partisan presentation of the man and his work, the writings of his detractors, both Catholic and Protestant, have been examined as carefully as the writings of his most extravagant eulogists. Earnest and faithful attempt has been made to describe the man as he was. To the best of my strength, honestly and impartially, though it must be confessed sympathetically, I have endeavored to present in the following pages the real Savonarola.

It may be asked if Savonarola might not have

saved himself from death if he had not been so uncompromising? Certainly. So might Socrates have saved himself from the hemlock, and the Man of Nazareth from the cross. But there are some things morally impossible. No man could be as great and powerful a personality as Savonarola was and cry out against the frightful evils of his time as he did without going to his death. The conflict between Savonarola and Pope Alexander VI was an irreconcilable one. W. H. C.

MEADVILLE, PA., February 5, 1907.

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Girolamo Savonarola

CHAPTER I.

THE TIMES IN WHICH HE LIVED.

The traveler who visits Florence will not linger long in gray palaces and renowned picture galleries before turning his face towards the monastery of San Marco. The Brothers of St. Dominic, former inhabitants of the place, are no longer there. Our new Italy, the Italy of Garibaldi, Cavour, and Victor Immanuel, has little use for monks. The monastery, confiscated by the State, is now preserved as a national monument and guarded by Italian police.

There is much of interest in this old monastery. It was built for the Dominicans by a wealthy banker of Florence, Cosimo de' Medici. Its library has the proud distinction of being the first public library founded in Italy. Its chapter-house has been forever consecrated by George Eliot as the place where Romola met her dying brother and heard for the first time a voice she dared not resist. Entering the gate and walking in the cloister garden, or wandering through the empty cells of the monks, one can not help thinking of

the men who have made this monastery so famous. First in the list is Fra Angelico. From entrance to farthest cell the lofty and pure soul of this Christian painter seems to hover near in the charming frescoes which are such beautiful expression of profound and devout piety. Then comes Angelico's friend Antonino, known as the holy bishop. A cell to the right on entering the corridor, marks the place of his devotions and tells of his kindly deeds. Farther on are the productions of another master of the brush. Bartolomeo has honorable place among the few whose spirits still linger in San Marco. But of all the men who have given name and fame to this monastery, the most conspicuous is Girolamo Savonarola. His cell is at the farthest end of the corridor. To many it is both oratory and sacred shrine. Hanging on the wall are his rosary and fragments of his robe and girdle; on a desk, near the small window overlooking the convent garden, are manuscripts of his sermons and a well-thumbed annotated Bible; there is the chair in which he sat, and above the desk the large wooden crucifix so often held aloft while Florence yielded to the influence of her great preacher.

Going out from San Marco and walking through the streets of Florence one may see on all sides historic memorials of the city's distinguished sons. There in a narrow street is the house of Michael Angelo. In Medici sepulcher and national museum are masterpieces of his chisel; yonder on San Miniato is his fortress; in Santa Croce is his tomb. The old home of Dante is still

open to visitors. A stone slab marks the spot where often, with expectation, he watched for his Beatrice; and proud monuments in church and open square do honor to this great Italian poet. The Medici have their buildings and tombs, paintings, manuscripts and gems, to tell of their power and wealth. But among all the men of note in Florentine history there is no more striking figure than Savonarola.

The critics do not yet come into perfect agreement when they try to sum up the elements of his character and point out the influence of his life. But for that matter the critics never come into perfect agreement as to anything. When they shall stop trying to find in this man a leader for some party, a prophet for some political achievement, an advocate for Protestantism, or a true son for Catholicism; when they shall stop trying to narrow the man and let him be as large as God made him; when we shall study him with our prejudices shaken off, and try to find out about him simply the truth, then it will be that Savonarola will come to his true place in history. In doctrine he was a Roman Catholic, in his warfare against a corrupt papacy a Protestant, in his reformation of public morals a Puritan, in his advocacy of the rights of the poor a Democrat. But no one of these can claim all the man. Poet and preacher, statesman and reformer, theologian and martyr, he must forever rank, not only as one of the most illustrious makers of Florence, but as one of the illustrious makers of European history.

No need to go into unfrequented corners to

find his memorials. There is hardly a street in Florence which does not remind one of him. Out from San Marco stood his wooden pulpit. The Riccardi palace on the Via Cavour tells how he and Capponi saved Florence from the fury of Charles VIII, King of France. The Duomo, in all its arches and in the immensity of its mighty dome, is still re-echoing the strains of his rare and commanding eloquence. The gray stones of the Palazzo Vecchio have voice to declare his valiant achievements and heroic fortitude. The Piazza Signoria, crowded at eventide, still speaks of excited multitudes—men, women, and children—who saw there the triumph, and saw also the humiliation, of the man who exerted larger influence upon Florence in his day than any other single man in all her history. The presence of Savonarola in Florence is pervasive.

But this twentieth century Florence is altogether too modern to furnish a background for the life and character of Savonarola. It has too many railroads, smacks too much of the telegraph and the telephone; they have bicycles there now and automobiles. If we would see the real Savonarola we must give play to our historic imagination and put ourselves, if we can, in the times in which he lived and breathe the spirit of his surroundings; we must turn back the pages in our book of history more than four hundred years till we come to the year of our Lord 1452. This is the year in which Savonarola was born. Forty-six years later he suffered martyrdom in Florence and his ashes were flung into the Arno. Born in Ferrara, two

years after the half century had begun, his life was cut short two years before the half century ended.

Here is an age which challenges attention and commands thought. The half century covered by the life of Savonarola was full of prophetic events. It was in this half century that printing was invented, the foe of tyranny and enemy of superstition; ignorance must hide her face, freedom has a new friend, and conscience an emancipator. It was in this half century that Constantinople was taken by the Turks; this meant for Italy the coming in of great scholars from the East with wealth of ancient manuscripts and precious gems. It was in this half century that the arm of Ferdinand broke the power of the Moors in Granada and drove the Saracens from most Catholic Spain. It was in this half century that Christopher Columbus of Genoa set sail to find a new passage to the Indies, but found in its stead the path to a new continent. It was in this same half century that away to the north in the town of Eisleben in Saxony Martin Luther was born; in the next half century this Saxon lad, grown to be monk, doctor, and reformer, will shake the world; and give to European civilization such an impetus for liberty and progressive ideas that her nations shall sit supreme among all the peoples of the earth. The last half of the fifteenth century was an age of transition. The soul of the *new* was struggling to break away from the traditions of the old.

The intellectual life of Italy was rejoicing in all the glories of the Renaissance. The study of

the humanities was everywhere hailed with enthusiasm. The classics commanded all the thought of those who laid any claim to scholarship. Greek art and architecture, language and literature, were everywhere praised, in the halls of the great universities and in the palaces of the nobility. But all this belonged only to the few. The masses were sunk in ignorance and superstition. The free school and suffrage were centuries in the future.

The political situation was about as bad as could be imagined. The empire had sunk to its lowest point. Rome was the center, but only in name; the emperor was little more than German king. Italy groaned under the misrule of petty tyrants. The race of real princes seemed to be dead. Degenerate sons, familiar only with the luxurious ease of profligate courts, knew not how to govern themselves, much less the people. It was an opportunity for war, and on all sides war's dread presence brought terror and destruction. Even from beyond the Alps were heard mutterings of its approach. Conspiracy, too, lifted her head in Milan, in Genoa, in Pavia; but her most frightful atrocities were in Florence. Liberty was dead. The rights of the individual were unprotected.

This was an age when the garments of the Church were defiled until they became a stench in the nostrils of purity. The tiara itself was bespattered with blood. The Chief Bishop of Christendom seemed to be serving two masters. "The popes of the Renaissance," says Dr. Schaff, "were the successors of Mæcenas rather than St. Peter."

They were intolerant of open heresy, but not always of open immorality. Pius II, renowned as a scholar, shielded illegitimate offspring by a frivolous appeal to David and Solomon. Sixtus IV, famous until now as the great cathedral builder, was a shameless promoter of nepotism and legalized prostitution to increase the revenues of the papal court. Innocent VIII, surrounded in the Vatican by bastard sons and daughters, established a bank for the sale of pardons. Each sin had its price. Roderigo Borgia, a Spaniard by birth; lawyer, soldier, cardinal, and finally pope, closed the century under the title Alexander VI. To this man belongs the bad pre-eminence of being the worst pope that ever sat in St. Peter's chair. There is no quarrel between Catholics and Protestants as to the character of Roderigo Borgia. A recent Catholic historian says: "The clearest proof that the Catholic Church is divine is the fact that such a Pontiff as Alexander VI could not destroy it." His ambition, avarice, and sensuality were simply notorious in his own day. With money he purchased the votes of the cardinals who made him pope. Simony he could not rebuke when it ministered to his unholy ambition. In Rome men said, "Alexander sells the keys, he sells the altars, he sells Jesus Christ." When there was no papal emissary there to hear, the answer was, "Well, he bought them, so he has a right to sell them." The Vatican was converted into an Oriental harem. The name of Alexander's daughter Lucretia has been written, whether justly or unjustly, in the shameless list with the Jezebels and Lady Macbeths of

the centuries. His son Cesare so played with the poisoned cup and the stiletto that Rome became a slaughter-house. This Cesare, incarnation of crime, Alexander promoted to highest ecclesiastical honors. No wonder the title "His Holiness" passed into a byword of reproach. The sins of the Vatican were also the sins of the priests. If money purchased the papacy for a Borgia, it also purchased heaven for the rake and the murderer. The servants of the altar were often the parasites of princely courts and the slaves of licentiousness. The cloisters, too, were tainted with corruption. The vows of poverty and chastity few pretended to keep. If the thirteenth century needed such men as Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic to rise and cry out against the abuses of the monastery, the fifteenth century needed them much more. All classes seemed to have caught the sordid and licentious spirit of the age. Italy was on the fatal slope which led to her ruin. Christianity was everywhere brought into derision and contempt. Such were the times in Italy in the last half of the fifteenth century. It was in the Borgian era that Savonarola was called to play his part in the drama of history.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION.

The name Savonarola was not unknown in Northern Italy. The first of the line of whom we have knowledge was one Antonio, a native of Padua, who in the thirteenth century fought so valiantly in defense of his city that one of her gates was named in his honor, and to this day it is called Porta Savonarola. The Reformer's grandfather, Michele Savonarola, had left the ancestral Paduan home at the urgent invitation of the Duke of Ferrara, Niccolo III, of the house of Este. This house of Este was one of the few great ruling houses of Northern Italy. It almost rivaled the Medici in its patronage of art, literature, and the sciences. No pains were spared to attract distinguished men to its court. It was to the court of Ferrara, one favorable to learning and art, that Michele Savonarola was invited in the middle of the fifteenth century. Eminent physician, man of letters, and distinguished lecturer, he added luster to the brilliant company to which he came.

The name had at least two centuries of fairly honorable history before the subject of this sketch, the noblest Savonarola of them all, was presented by his father for holy baptism in the Church of Santa Maria del Vaio. His father Niccolo was a man of little worth, a hanger-on of the court. He

studied medicine some, but seems to have failed to make good in anything except appearing well at court functions. The mother was totally different. Like Augustine, Gregory, and Constantine, Savonarola had a mother who was a woman of strong mind and noble character. Her name was Elena, daughter of the illustrious house of Bonacossi of Mantua. It is an accepted saying that great men have usually had remarkable mothers. Savonarola was no exception. His mother was a woman of fine intellect, rare culture, and almost masculine strength of character. She was ever held in tenderest affection by her illustrious son. It is significant of Savonarola's fine spirit and real greatness that he always treated his father with respect. He gave him all the honor which would have been due him from a devoted son had he been one of the noblest citizens of Ferrara; but it was to his mother that he gave his heart's affection. His love for her was beautiful and tender during his entire life. It was to her that he opened his heart in the dark days of trial when the city of Florence was beginning to turn against him, and when he saw ahead only the triumph of wicked enemies and a tragic death. To this Niccolo and Elena were born five sons and two daughters. Girolamo was the third of the sons. He was born on St. Matthew's Day, September 21, 1452. His baptismal name was Girolamo Marco Francesco Matteo.

Many stories have gathered about the childhood of Savonarola, but few of them are thought to have any foundation in fact. The one distin-

guishing mark of his youth was his seriousness. He was not pretty, so we are told, or playful; he coveted quiet and his mood was usually that of reserve. Silent and solitary, he was often seen walking in green fields or wandering by the banks of the river Po. He had one great friend and teacher to whom he owed much, his grandfather. "With the patience and simple directness gained by long years and experience this wise old scientist," says Villari, "devoted himself to the development of his grandson's intellect, the careful unfolding of its budding thoughts and ideas. Such a training was undoubtedly the best of schools; and the boy soon rewarded his grandsire's devotion by showing a true passion for study. So great was his ardor for books that even those beyond his comprehension were eagerly seized upon and ransacked for hidden treasures." Perhaps the early biographers may put it a little too strongly when they describe him, even while a mere lad, as endowed with "marvelous love of truth" and a "charm which seemed to carry towards truth by its own nature," but there is good evidence that he was a youth of much more than usual promise.

The affection of Michele Savonarola for this grandson is rare and beautiful; but unfortunately the devoted teacher died when his pupil had hardly reached his teens. It had long been expected that Girolamo would perpetuate the reputation of the family by taking up the profession of his grandfather. Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas were in those days considered indispensable as a preparation for the study of medicine. These authors our

young medical student seems to have read with great eargerness. The study of their writings did much to give direction to his later life. In Aristotle he laid broad and deep foundations for his intellectual development; in Thomas Aquinas he prepared the way for future theological studies and for his career in monastery and pulpit. Both masters he studied with great earnestness, and both affected mightily his future life. Plato he studied later, but Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas were the two books, apart from the Bible, which made the man.

Modern Ferrara gives little conception of the Ferrara of the fifteenth century in which Savonarola carried on his medical studies. The modern city shows here and there marks of former magnificence. The cathedral and the ducal palace tell of glory and greatness long gone. The broad deserted streets are now grass grown; bastions, towers, ancient walls, and moldy palaces suggest a grandeur belonging to another age. Signs of decay are everywhere. All that the traveler sees in churches, palaces, and other public buildings, tells of a golden age of long ago. The population of the present city is about thirty thousand. The population of the former city, made glorious by the house of Este, was one hundred thousand. The city was prosperous, too. Commercially and politically it was at this time one of the famous cities of Italy. Here came noble princes as guests; emperors also came, and even popes. Festivities were almost perpetual. Shows and carnivals followed each other in quick succession. The splendor of

the city and court was at its height during the youth of Savonarola.

The names of two of the Dukes of Ferrara ought to be remembered: Niccolo III, who invited Michele Savonarola to the court of Este, and Borso, who succeeded to the dukedom in 1450 and ruled until 1471. Niccolo built strong the foundations of his house which was to be resplendent as a center of learning and art. By overcoming all the lords of surrounding strongholds, he became absolute in his power in the province and in the city. He improved the years of peace by enriching the cathedral, building churches, palaces, and other stately edifices. At his death he was succeeded by a natural son, Lionello, who reigned for nine years, when Borso, another natural son, came to the throne. These were two of the "bastard princes" who made Italy notorious in the fifteenth century. The times in which they ruled were not favorable to the peaceful occupany of a place of power. Milan was in revolt; Venice was jealous; on all sides was war. But Ferrara, how it happened is not altogether clear even yet, was known as "the land of peace." Lionello has this to his credit that he was the friend of scholars and protected sculptors and poets, Guarino being one; he composed Latin orations and Italian sonnets; he founded the famous Este Museum, and was largely responsible for the prosperity of the university. Dazzling luxury marked his reign, and stories of the brilliant festivities he directed were told far and near.

In the display and magnificence of his court

functions Lionello was tame in comparison with Borso, who came after him. This Borso was not a model prince though he did have some good qualities. He loved justice, so it is said, and caused it to be constantly observed, when it did not clash with his own personal interests. But better than justice itself, he loved the title which was usually conferred upon him, "The Just." More than any other ruler in Northern Italy, Borso reminds one of Lorenzo the Magnificent of Florence. The brilliancy of his court, his patronage of learning, his political pretensions and ambitions, his utter disregard of the liberties of the people whom he governed, all mark him as a fine prototype of Lorenzo. "As Lord of Ferrara," says Villari, "he was lavish in hospitality to all, he had a rare collection of manuscripts and antiquities, was always seen dressed in gold brocade, and the richest stuff in Italy was worn at his court. He had the finest falcons, horses, and dogs that had ever been seen; he was even famous for the excellence of his buffoons; descriptions of his State entertainments were frequently circulated throughout the whole of Italy."

In 1452, the year of Savonarola's birth, Ferrara was visited by the Emperor Frederick III. He was on his way to receive the imperial crown at the hands of the pope. His retinue comprised two thousand men. Borso, so we are told, rode forth to meet him, attended by all his nobles and clergy, and for ten successive days gave tournaments, concerts, and balls in his honor. On the emperor's return from Rome these festivities were renewed, and on a

still grander scale. The emperor was now received on a magnificently decorated platform in the Piazza in all the gorgeous trappings of imperial display, and wearing the imperial crown. Borso, hardly less gorgeously attired, presented himself to the emperor to receive the ducal title he had so earnestly coveted. After the fashion of a people without liberty and caught in the toils of a richly brocaded despotism, men on all sides shouted, "The duke! The duke! Long live Duke Borso!"

This display Savonarola did not see, but he did look upon pageants far more imposing and magnificent. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the increasing power of the Turk caused much anxiety in Northern Italy. There was almost universal call for a new crusade. But there was no one to gather up the yearnings of the people and give them expression in action. There was no Peter the Hermit, no Bernard of Clairvaux. Nothing was done until 1458, when Pope Pius II, newly come to the chair of St. Peter, summoned a council at Mantua, and called the Christian powers to act in a holy war against the great Infidel. In journeying from Rome to Mantua, Pius II visited Ferrara. He came with retinue the like of which had never been seen in the city of the house of Este. In this retinue were ten cardinals, sixty bishops, and many secular princes. The pope entered Ferrara under a canopy of gold. The streets were covered with cloth or strewn with flowers; rich tapestries and gay festival decorations hung from the windows, and the city was filled with shoutings, songs, and music. Stately ceremonies

in the cathedral gave welcome to the Pontiff, and festivities truly royal detained him many days.

The council at Mantua was long remembered for the eloquent speeches delivered. Nothing was done, however, for the crusade. But the failure of a Church council could not check the enthusiasm of the festival-loving people of Ferrara. On the pope's return journey to Rome he halted again at Ferrara where he was welcomed and feted more royally than before. Even pagan divinities, it is said, were set up in his honor. The glory of these receptions must have been long discussed and often in the hearing of the youthful Savonarola.

The gay court to which his family was attached possessed no attractions for Girolamo Savonarola. Only once, it is said, did he ever enter the splendid castle of the duke. The festivities and frivolities were not to his liking. His keen eye, true as well as keen, was beginning to see beneath the surface. It has been suggested that the castle itself, that grim, quadrangular building with its four massive towers, must have seemed typical of the social life of Ferrara. The subterranean dungeons of the castle were full of immured victims. The clanking of chains and the groans of human beings in pain could be heard from their depths. Above were strains of music and ceaseless revelry; the ringing of silver plate, the clatter of majolica dishes, and the clinking of Venetian glass. Anguish groaned beneath the songs of revelry. All was brilliant without, but Savonarola saw, with that keen and true eye of his, that all this brilliancy was only the flush of humanity's fever. The brilliance

was the brilliance of disease. The shows and carnivals, which dazzled the people and held them in strange fascination, were to him only "the ringing of silver plate and the clinking of Venetian glass." The fruits of tyranny which he saw, in ignorance, in vice, and in superstition; in lost liberties and throttled life, these were "the clanking of chains and the groans of human beings in pain." He felt that justice was dethroned. In a poem on the ruin of the world he cried out in the bitterness of passion:

> "Happy henceforth he who by rapine lives,
> He who on the blood of others swells and feeds;
> Who widows robs and from his children's needs
> Takes tribute; and the poor to ruin drives."

There were a few brief days when the young Girolamo saw a brighter side to life. A Strozzi girl, whose family had been exiled from Florence, lived near his home. She was a girl of dark hair and rich black eyes, so the chroniclers say. An ardent affection for this fair exile soon gave Savonarola to feel the music and freshness of a new hope. The world took on a new meaning and beauty. He saw all now through the eyes of tender love. But when he declared his affection he was repulsed with haughty disdain. "No Strozzi," said she, "may stoop to wed a Savonarola." Pierced as by a rapier thrust, he flung back at her a cruel fact concerning a stain on her birth. Perhaps he repented afterwards. We do not know. But his dream world was suddenly shattered. The old and serious thoughts came back. Contempt for the

world, horror at the misery he saw, increasing interest in Aquinas, and finally, a single word in the sermon of an Augustinian monk, led him to renounce his profession and forsake his home to enter a monastery. The "single word" was spoken at Faenza in 1474, by a wicked monk, but the word stuck. What it was he never told. Whatever it was, it marked the beginning of a new plan for his life. He could no longer find liberty or peace in the world, he would seek it in the Church. This ought to be marked as a crisis in his life; perhaps *the* crisis. John Chrysostom did not enter the cloister of Diodorus, or Martin Luther approach the gates of Erfurt, with higher aim or nobler purpose, than did Savonarola offer himself to the Brothers of St. Dominic in Bologna.

On an April morning, in all the strength of his young manhood, he sat with his mother for the last time in the old home. It was just a year since his decision to enter a monastery. For twelve months he had been struggling against the breaking of home ties. Playing upon his lute he sang in such sad strain that his mother stopped him: "My son, this is a token of separation." With faltering touch he continued to finger the strings, but into his mother's face he dared not look. He felt that she knew his secret. On the morrow when Ferrara was wild with festivities in honor of St. George, he ran away from his home. He fled from his profession, his friends, and all the preferment open to him in the court of Ferrara; and before the sun had set on Lombard hills, he was clad in the white robe of a Dominican novice.

On the morning after arriving in Bologna, he wrote a letter to his father, describing in full the reasons which led him to forsake his home to enter a monastery. The letter was earnest and affectionate. In it he called attention to a paper on "Contempt for the World," left behind some books on his desk, which was, in a sense, a defense of his action. This paper, discovered about a generation ago, has written on it the following words by Savonarola's father: "I remember how, on the 24th of April, which was St. George's day in 1475, Girolamo my son, student in arts, departed from his home and went to Bologna, and entered among the Brothers of St. Dominic in order to become a brother; and left me, me Niccolo della Savonarola, his father, these underwritten consolations and exhortations for my satisfaction."

This brief document affords clear proof that Savonarola saw, and with clear vision, the woes about to come upon Italy, and saw also that in some way he was to be a special messenger of God to warn the people of these woes. "Not one," so a paragraph in the document reads, "not a single righteous man is left. It behooves us to learn from babes and women of low estate, for in these only doth there yet linger any shadow of innocence. The good are oppressed and the people of Italy become like unto the Egyptians who held God's people in bondage. But already famine, flood, pestilence, and many other signs, betoken future ill and herald the wrath of God. Divide, O Lord, divide once again the waters of the Red Sea, and let the impious perish in the flood of Thy wrath."

The letter to his father may be regarded as an apology for his apparently unfilial act. "I wish you," he writes, "as a true man, and one who despises fleeting things, to be influenced by truth, and not by passion like women, and to judge, under the dominion of reason, whether I am right in fleeing from the world." He then speaks of the evils of the age described in the paper on "Contempt of the World," and explains and defends his action in leaving home. "Instead of weeping," he says, "you have rather to thank the Lord Jesus who has given you a son, and then has preserved him to you for twenty-two years; and not only this, but besides has designed to make him His knight-militant. Ah! do you not regard it as a great grace to have a son a knight of Jesus Christ? But, to speak shortly, either it is true that you love me, or it is not true. I know well that you will not say you do not love me. If then you love me, since I have two parts, that is, the soul and the body, do you love most the soul or the body? You can not say the body, because you would not love me if you loved the baser part of me. If then you love the soul best, why should you not seek the good of the soul? Therefore, you ought to rejoice, and to regard this as a triumph. Do you believe that it is not a great grief for me to be separated from you?"

Mrs. Oliphant, in criticizing this letter, points out that such pleas have been repeated from the beginning of the world, and will be to its end, whenever a good and loving child obeys a personal impulse which is contrary to filial duty, but not to

filial tenderness. Perhaps a truer criticism would be to suggest that in this case, as in many others, personal conviction as to duty often comes into sharp conflict with filial affection. Influenced by deep and strong conviction, there was only one thing for Savonarola to do. "Believe me," he writes, "that never since I was born have I had a greater grief nor a greater affliction of mind, than seeing myself abandon my own blood, and go among people unknown, in order to make a sacrifice to Jesus Christ of my body, and to sell my will into the hands of those whom I never knew." This letter is addressed to "The noble and excellent man, Niccolo Savonarola, the best of parents."

What effect this letter may have had we can only imagine. It undoubtedly brought quick reply from his fond mother. There is a second letter, but without date, in which the young monk expresses great regret that his father and mother should reproach him or complain of his decision. This letter begins, "Why do ye weep, blind ones? Why do ye complain so much? If our temporal prince had called me now to girt a sword on my side in the midst of the people, and to make me one of his knights, what joy you would have experienced! And if I had then repudiated such an honor, would you not have thought me a fool? And now the Prince of princes, He who is of infinite power, calls me with a loud voice, even prays me (O great love!) with a thousand tears, to girt a sword on my side, of the finest gold and precious stones, and wishes to place me among the number of His knights militant! And now,

because I have not refused so great honor, although I am unworthy (and who would refuse it?),—because I, giving thanks to so great a Lord, since He thus wills, have accepted it,—you will afflict me, when you ought to rejoice and give thanks; and the more you do so, the more you show that you love me."

The reference in the above letter to the call to knighthood by the temporal prince, meaning the duke, was undoubtedly to remind his parents of their joy that his oldest brother, Ognibene, had entered the army. Ognibene's decision had led to no complaint on their part. They praised him rather. The young monk would persuade them that their joy in his own decision ought to be greater. This letter seems to have had the desired effect. Both parents recognized that his decision was unalterable. His was the stronger will, and there was left nothing for them but to be resigned. For Savonarola, the new life he had chosen was all before him and untried. He threw himself into it with decision, strength, and enthusiasm.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE MONASTERY OF BOLOGNA.

The life in Bologna was full of eager study and earnest thought. Worn with fasting, his clothing the coarsest, Savonarola showed a marked ability which soon led to his appointment as instructor of the novices.

This was not at all according to the program he had laid out. He had come to the monastery praying that he might be employed in the humblest and most menial duties of the brotherhood. Gladly would he become simply a convent drudge if he might thus do penance for his sins! Long afterwards he told his intimate friend and biographer, Pico della Mirandola, that when he entered the convent in Bologna, he had not purposed to take holy orders, nor have anything to do with his favorite philosophical studies. His sole purpose was to ask for the privilege of manual labor. His thought was to work in the garden, make clothes for the brothers, and do other work of like character. He had no desire to "merely change from an Aristotle of the world to an Aristotle of the cloister." Two things he wanted—peace and liberty. For these he had come to the convent. It was, therefore, a grief instead of a joy when he was commanded by his superior to instruct the novices in physics and philosophy. But remem-

bering his three-fold vow—poverty, chastity, obedience—there was only one thing for him to do—obey. That he did.

The monastery was not all that Savonarola had hoped for. Its solitude did bring peace and liberty, but the quiet of cloistered surroundings did not blind him to frightful corruptions and abuses. At times his soul was roused to fury as he thought of the dreadful havoc wrought by princes of the Church. Costly buildings, processions, and festivals did not concern him; he was striving after the purity of the inner life of the soul. An ardent student of the Bible, he knew it almost by heart, from Genesis to Revelation. In his early as well as in his later study of the Bible, Savonarola was particularly impressed with the bold and striking imagery of the prophets and Revelation. John Knox in his little room over High Street in Edinburgh, did not study his Bible more earnestly and faithfully than did Savonarola in his cell near the shrine of St. Dominic.

Perhaps the most significant event during the seven years spent in this monastery, was the discovery that the corruption which he had seen blighting the world was also blasting the Church. The foul atmosphere of the court and the rabble had touched also the priests and monks. It was in Ferrara that he wrote his poem on "The Ruin of the World." In Bologna he wrote a new poem. Its title was, "The Ruin of the Church." In his poetic vision the Church was represented as a chaste and venerable virgin. Burning to speak with her, he asks, "Where is the light of early

days? Where are the ancient saints? Where is the learning, love, and purity of olden times? Taking him by the hand the virgin leads him to a poor cave where she dwells. She shows him her beautiful body "disfigured with the wine red finger marks of evil." "Who hath done this?" he asks. The Church replies, "A false, proud, harlot; Rome hath done it." Then it was that the fiery indignation of the future prophet broke forth in strongest passion, *"O God, lady, that I might break those spreading wings!"*

In Morley's life of William Ewart Gladstone, particular attention is called to an entry which Gladstone made in his diary while a student in Oxford University. The entry was this: "The great end is that the love of God may become the *habit* of my soul, and particularly these things are to be sought: The gift of love, of self-sacrifice, of purity, of energy." This entry Mr. John Morley describes as the biographic clew to Gladstone's life. It was the working out of the resolution expressed in the words written in the diary which made Gladstone the man he was. Mr. Morley was exceedingly happy in seizing upon the true biographic clew to the future greatness and Christian statesmanship of Gladstone. In seeking to find a biographic clew to the life of Girolamo Savonarola, the careful student of his character and achievements is almost irresistibly drawn to the words quoted above, "O God, lady, that I might break those spreading wings." During all his life from Bologna on, his one great purpose was this, to "break the spreading wings" of papal corruption

then blighting and blasting the Church. In this poem, we see the first strugglings of a mighty spirit which shall yet cause an unworthy occupant of Peter's chair to tremble for his security.

The reigning pontiff during the seven years of Savonarola's residence in Bologna was Sixtus IV. This pope was described in the opening chapter as "a shameless promoter of nepotism," and a man who "legalized prostitution to increase the revenues of his papal court." If the political situation in Italy was bad, and it was bad, there was nothing in the leadership of the Church to make it better. Rome was impotent. No wonder such a condition of affairs roused the righteous wrath of the young monk. He could not help seeing that the scandalous lust of Sixtus knew no bounds. His five nephews were all singled out for high honors. One was made Prefect of Rome, another a cardinal, the third suddenly acquired much gold and married a princess, the fourth, a particular favorite of the pope, the notorious Riario, was elevated from simple friar to cardinal prelate, with title San Sisto. And he had further honors in being made Patriarch of Constantinople and Archbishop of Florence. Dashing, unscrupulous, and ambitious, this ecclesiastical spendthrift reveled in such unusual luxury of living that he rivaled even the most dissolute of Italian princes. This, too, in an age when the gross dissoluteness of Italian princes was notorious.

The name of this Riario was well known in Ferrara. Stories of his hospitality (hospitality of doubtful propriety it was, too) to the Princess

Elenora of Aragon when in Rome, were public property in the city. It was known also that none of these excesses seemed to change in the least the affection of Sixtus for his favorite nephew. The character of this pope and the unholy doings of his gay nephew, whose sins even a cardinal's robes could not hide, were known and scorned by the young Savonarola.

The general degradation politically which made possible such open scandal in the Church, has been accounted for by the fact that whereas former rulers had fought their way to power over the heads of their enemies, their sons, born in ease and reared in palaces, were only trained to the luxuries of life. Such conditions were favorable to war; not great war, but petty war. Plots and conspiracies were frequent. One of the worst conspiracies of the time, that of the Pazzi in Florence, is so suggestive of political and ecclesiastical conditions, that it perhaps ought to be told just here. The name of the Medici has already been referred to. The house was the most powerful in Florence, and for half a century they were absolute masters of the city. One member of this house, Lorenzo de' Medici, familiarly known as Lorenzo the Magnificent, will stand out as one of the two most conspicuous figures in the background of the picture of Savonarola and his times. The Pazzi were also a noble family of Florence. They were related to the Medici, but jealous of them. Their name has been given to a plot made against the life of Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano. They were not the prime movers in the plot, but they

were active in it. It has been charged that the instigator of the conspiracy was no less a personage than Pope Sixtus himself. The charge is probably without foundation, but it is certain that his beautiful nephew, the gay Riario, had a hand in the plans, and that Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa, was an active participant. The plan was to assassinate the two brothers at once on a given Sunday, and during mass, in the cathedral. Montesecco, a soldier of some reputation, was hired to do the deed; but when he found what place they had fixed upon for the killing his courage failed. He was ready to commit murder, but would not bring upon himself the guilt of sacrilege in addition. The conspirators had to find other instruments. Two priests finally consented. Why not? Were they not asked by princes of the Church? And were not the liberties of the people to be restored when the enemy was dead? Had not Riario and Salviati promised it? And did they not truly represent the Head of the Church? The signal agreed upon was the ringing of the bell which announced the elevation of the host. One priest did his work well. Giuliano fell dead at the first thrust or two of the knife. Lorenzo escaped. He was wounded, but drawing his sword fought his way bravely to the sacristy. The conspirators then sought to rouse the populace. The populace was ready and rose up, but not in defense of the Pazzi. That very day, and within a few hours after the bloody celebration of the mass, the Archbishop of Pisa was hung from a window of the Riccardi palace, his ecclesiastical robes still on, and beside

him hung the lifeless form of one of the Pazzi. Others of the conspirators were quickly hunted out and slain. Not much care was taken to identify them either. The important thing was to do enough killing to give the impression that the conspirators were thoroughly punished.

The purpose of this conspiracy was supremacy. The most extraordinary feature about the affair was the rank of the principals. If Pope Sixtus did not promote the conspiracy he certainly did not try to prevent it. His pet nephew would have profited had it succeeded. No wonder the pope was angry when he heard how the plot had failed. It is said that he broke forth in fierce threats and anathemas; not against the assassins, but against Lorenzo and the people of his city. He suspended the bishops and clergy of Florence from the exercise of all spiritual functions. And this was in the open! Men knew about it and talked about it.

What of Savonarola? Did he see clearly the meaning of it all? Three years before, the harlotry of Rome had so stirred his soul that he cried out, "O God, lady, that I might break those spreading wings!" How these later happenings must have roused his righteous indignation! "It was in these times and amid these events that the mind of Savonarola grew into shape."

In the monastery, carefully attending to the instruction of the novices, Savonarola did not forget that the "chaste and venerable virgin" had said, "Weep and be silent; so it seemeth best to me." He was austere in his habits; far more so than the rules of the brotherhood required. He fasted much

and ate only what was necessary to sustain life. His clothing was plain and coarse, but always scrupulously clean. He preached poverty faithfully and earnestly, but he abhorred dirt. Like John Wesley of a later time he believed that cleanliness is next to godliness. His bed was a rudely arranged lattice work of wood, covered with a sack of straw and a rough woolen blanket. His vigils of prayer were frequent and long continued. Worn almost to a skeleton by his rigid mortification of the flesh, he walked about looking more like a shadow than a man.

There is a story that two monks of Vallombrosa who came to visit him were so struck by the contrast between his coarse garments and their own luxurious attire that they thought it necessary to make some explanation. Their frocks they said were made of fine cloth because it wore so much longer. "Ah," replied Savonarola dryly, "what a pity it is that St. Benedict and San Giovanni Gualberto did not know that; for then they might have worn the same!" The monks had no further excuses to offer for their fine clothes.

As a teacher of the novices Savonarola's success was marked. He was thorough in his studies. He thought clearly and had rare power in expressing his thoughts to others when speaking to a small company of interested hearers. In Bologna he took up the writings of Plato, and for a time was greatly interested in them; but the book he studied most and loved best was the Bible. It was in the exposition of the Bible to the novices, rather than in explaining Aristotle and the principles of physics, in which he found greatest de-

light. Such was his success with the novices that he was promoted from the office of instructor to that of preacher, and was sent to visit several of the convents in Northern Italy and to preach in the churches. In 1481 he was appointed to preach in Ferrara, his native city. This was not an easy task, and he went to it unwillingly. Something of the spirit of prophecy was already upon him, but he shrank from the pulpit. A fire burned in his soul, but he was not yet ready to preach. Besides, Ferrara was the last place he would have chosen. This was his home, and he was not sure how his message would be received.

But he was under command to preach, and he gave himself to the task with enthusiasm and energy. His sermons do not seem to have made any great impression, either in Ferrara or in other cities and towns where he preached. This may have been because he had not yet learned how to express the thought which burned within his soul. It was a keen disappointment to him that his preaching in Ferrara was not more fruitful in results. In a letter to his mother he says, "It is very seldom that a monk can do his best work in his native country. People have less confidence in the counsels of a fellow-citizen than in those of a stranger. 'No prophet is accepted in his own country,' said our Savior; and he was not accounted one by his own countrymen. If I were to do in Ferrara what I do in other cities they would say as they did of Christ, 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of a carpenter and of Mary?' So of me: 'Is not this Master Girolamo who committed such and such sins, and who was no better

than we were? We know him well.' And they would give no heed to my word." Perhaps another reason why he was not heard with greater favor was that his preaching was so strikingly different from that of the friars, whose aim was not edification but entertainment. The passion to please dictated the pulpit fashion of the age. The popular friars tickled the ears of the multitude with stories and buffooneries, coarse jokes and the like; they spoke smooth sentences and they were entertaining. Such preaching Savonarola branded as a dead word and not Jesus Christ.

The sermons in Ferrara were cut short by civil war. The States of the Church on one side and the States of the princes on the other, seemed about to center upon Ferrara as their battle-ground, the forces of Sixtus coming from the south and the forces of Venice from the north. Savonarola was ordered by his superior to leave Ferrara and take up quarters with the brothers of San Marco in Florence.

The journey across the Apennines must have been one filled with strange thoughts, disappointment and home commingled. From the heights of Fiesole he would catch his first glimpse of his new home. Standing there where he stood, with the blue heights of the Apennines behind us and the valley of the Arno at our feet, let us look for a moment at the city to which our young monk is going. Florence is beautiful for situation. "The city of flowers and the flower of cities" shines in all its mediæval splendor. The slopes above the left bank of the winding Arno, from San Miniato towards the sea, and the heights above the side

of the city nearest us, from beyond Careggi there to the left of the road which leads to Fiesole, are decked with charming villas, which look out from their foliaged surroundings like gems of beauty glittering under the soft and sunny skies of Tuscany. There within the city gates are the palaces of the nobility. Art and architecture have done their best to build within the walls of Florence monuments which shall be the marvel of succeeding centuries. Arnolfo's tower stands above its palace of strength, a silent sentinel, but ready to ring out its warning in the hour of danger. The Loggia dei Lanzi looks out on the Piazza as if to listen to the discussions of the people and learn their thoughts. The Campanile of Giotto shines like a silver pillar! Ruskin describes it as the best combination of strength and beauty ever produced by mortal. In front of the Duomo are the bronze doors of Ghiberti hanging on their hinges in the Baptistery. "They are fit," said Michael Angelo, "to be the gates of Paradise." But above all and king of all is the mighty dome of Brunelleschi, without a rival among all the cathedrals of Italy.

The conspicuous man in this Florence is Lorenzo the Magnificent. Most illustrious member of the house of Medici, he is now at the height of his power and fame. For Lorenzo as the patron of learning and art no eulogy is too extravagant. Painting is awakened to new life; sculpture is honored; princely palaces are built and stately churches; the classics have nowhere more earnest study; on the street corners and in the market-place men discuss the rival philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Lorenzo has gathered about him a

company of artists and scholars matched nowhere in all Europe. There is Poliziano! brilliant professor of Greek and Latin eloquence in the university, first poet of his age. There is Landino! the expositor of Dante. There is Pico della Mirandola! "the most learned creature," says Mrs. Oliphant, "that ever fluttered near a prince;" classical writer and Orientalist, linguist and scientist. There is Marsilio Ficino! founder of the far-famed Platonic Academy; the man who more than any other represents the renaissance of Platonic philosophy and exerts largest influence in the progress of independent thought. Into this charmed circle will come in a few days the young Michael Angelo to chisel his mighty conceptions into forms of beauty.

This is the Florence upon which Savonarola now looks for the first time. He will make his home in the monastery of San Marco, just within the San Gallo gate yonder. Florence! The simple monk who approaches thy gates is a man thou wilt do well to know. The spotless lily on thy coat of arms has not more purity in its face than thou wilt find in his soul. He will be a better prophet of thy future than any representative of thy Platonic Academy. He will touch diviner notes of poetry in thy Duomo yonder than any son of the muses who sits at Lorenzo's table. He will speak out for thy liberty when every other voice is silent. He will have the courage and fortitude to steady thy ship of State when mobs and tyrants would peril thy independence. Open thy gates wide to him to-day! Bid him welcome.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY DAYS IN SAN MARCO.

The early days in San Marco seem to have been hopeful ones. Angels, madonnas, and saints, fresh from the brush of Angelico, looked down on the new brother with heavenly faces. The name of the holy bishop, Antonino, was ever on the lips of the monks. The novices listened with rapt attention to the new lecturer. There was an air of scholarship in the new surroundings which was pleasing to the eager mind of Savonarola. Here in this monastery were spent the happiest and most joyful years of his life; here also the saddest and most painful.

The monastery of San Marco was originally the home of a company of Sylvestrine monks who had come from Vallombrosa in the closing years of the thirteenth century. For a full hundred years these brothers of St. Sylvester lived worthy lives and wrought for the good of the Church and for Florence. After the great plague described by Boccaccio, discipline was relaxed and evils began to creep in. In 1436, through the influence of Cosimo de' Medici, the property was turned over to a society of Dominicans who had formerly lived in a small monastery at Fiesole, but later established themselves in a convent in the region of San Miniato, back of where the Boboli gardens are now.

This monastery was turned over to the Sylvestrine monks, and the Brothers of St. Dominic, in solemn procession, entered San Marco.

The buildings of San Marco were at that time in a sad state of dilapidation, partly through neglect and partly because of a serious fire during the previous year. Cosimo, the great patron of the Dominicans in Florence, promised 10,000 florins for the rebuilding of the monastery. He actually spent nearly 40,000 before he was done. The work was intrusted to Michelozzo Michelozzi, one of the most celebrated architects of the day. The result was practically a new monastery which was completed in 1443. Not content with the new buildings, Cosimo desired to secure for the Dominicans a valuable library. But manuscripts were expensive, and it was no easy task to secure such a library as Cosimo wanted. Fortunately for him, the greatest collector of manuscripts in all Europe, Niccolò Niccoli, had just died leaving his rare and valuable collection to Florence. But with manuscripts and codices he had also bequeathed many debts, which the city was not able to assume. These Cosimo paid off, and then turned over the whole library, not counting a few codices which he reserved for himself, to the monastery. This library gave to San Marco a pleasing pre-eminence as a center of erudition and culture. Brothers of the Dominican Order, ambitious for further knowledge of letters, came to Florence, and men of distinction both lay and clerical, frequently visited the monastery to see the library and to converse with the more learned of the friars.

Two men so lived and wrought in this monastery during the early years of its history that no sketch of Savonarola, however brief, would be complete without mentioning their names, and telling something of what they did. One was Giovanni da Fiesole, known to Christian art, and to the Christian world, as Fra Angelico. It was he who covered the convent walls with the incomparable frescoes already referred to. Vasari describes him as a man of simple and blameless life, who painted incessantly, but never painted other than sacred subjects. He might have amassed a fortune, but he scorned to do so, saying that true riches consisted in being content with little. He might have enjoyed dignities both within and without his convent, but he refused. Humane and temperate, he led a chaste life, avoiding the snares of the world, and he was wont to explain that peace and quiet were essential to the pursuit of art, and that he who illustrates the acts of Christ should live in his presence. If he received an order for a painting, he would first consult the wishes of his superior; permission once granted, he was always ready to perform his part. In a word, he was modest and humble in all his actions, and in his pictures tender and pious. No one, so well as he, knew how to confer upon saints the air and semblance of real sanctity. He never retouched or altered anything he had finished, but left it as it was, believing it to be the wish of God that it should be so. An appreciative Catholic critic says: "Fra Angelico, I feel tempted to believe, nourished his mind on the Imitation of Christ when he

was not studying the Holy Scriptures; for it is the spirit of the 'Imitation,' the spirit of the Gospel of St. John, that illuminates his canvases." No visitor to San Marco can enter the cells, linger in the cloisters, or sit down in the chapter-house before the great crucifixion without feeling that Michael Angelo was right in saying that Angelico must have visited Paradise and been allowed to select his models from among those he saw there. Painting to him was prayer, and his pictures were as prayers laid at the feet of his Savior. The Catholic Church has never written his name in the list of saints, but Christian art knows him as "Angelico."

The second name is that of Antonino, already described, as "the holy bishop whose cell is at the right on entering the corridor." Proud as the brothers of San Marco were of all their costly manuscripts and rich treasures of art, they gloried most in their founder and spiritual father, Antonino. He was one of those characters, says Villari, who are the true glories of the human race. One of those true men he was, whose life was a living example of self-abnegation, active charity, and beautiful Christian love. He was the founder of nearly every benevolent institution in Florence. The institutions he did not found he revived or changed their purpose. He had the happy faculty of touching the bad and making it good. The society of the Bigallo, once captains of the faith, but later the terror of Florence, was transformed into a society for the rescue and care of forsaken orphans. It was he who founded the society of

"The Good Men of St. Martin," a society to secure relief for the honest poor who were ashamed to beg. These are only a few of the things he did for the public benefit. Often he was seen going about the city leading a donkey loaded with bread and clothes for those who suffered from poverty and plague. His death, in 1459, was mourned in Florence as a public calamity. His name in the monastery was like ointment poured out.

Such was the San Marco to which Savonarola came in 1481. Charmed by the frescoes of Angelico, and influenced by the spirit of Antonino, which still pervaded the cloister, the early days in Florence must have been among the happiest of his life. No wonder he felt that he had come into the world of his dreams. The past was almost forgotten in an ambitious and hopeful present.

But that keen and true eye which had looked beneath the surface in Ferrara, soon began to discover that in Florence also there was a seeming and a real. The monks who lauded Antonino took no thought to live his life. The painters who praised Angelico had nothing of his spirit. Art had no high ideal. Much of the boasted scholarship was only meaningless imitation. The people, fascinated by the spell of their magnificent Lorenzo, had lost their liberties and did not know it. In the shows and carnivals of their ruler, they heard only "the ringing of silver plate and the clinking of Venetian glass." In the tightening grip of the tyrant, his usurpation, profligacy, and bloodshed; in the lewd songs of the street and the abandoned

corruption of the popular mind; in the fawning parasitism of the princely families and the spoliation of public morals; in the intolerable degradation of the poor and the free play of the assassin's dagger, Savonarola heard "the clanking of chains and the groans of human beings in pain."

The preachers of Florence quoted in their sermons from the Greek poets and Latin orators; seldom from the Gospels and Epistles. They presented not the Christ of Calvary but the gods of Olympus. The Church had become paganized. With eye and ear open to all, the old indignation of Savonarola again broke forth. Often the impassioned cry must have escaped, in the privacy of his cell or as he walked about the monastery, "O, that I might break those spreading wings!"

The opportunity came. He was invited to preach the Lenten sermons in the Church of San Lorenzo. As lecturer in San Marco he had made some reputation, and a fine audience greeted him for the first sermon; but before the sermons were done less than two-score people remained to hear him. The defeat was simply overwhelming. Was it because the people of Florence were not churchgoers? Not at all. Fra Mariano was preaching to crowds in the spacious Church of Santo Spirito, on the other side of the Arno. The church was filled to the doors at every service, and everywhere the sermons were praised, praised for their grand sentences and periods of harmonious cadence. What will Savonarola do? The pulpit is closed against him by his own announcement that he will preach no more. The one direction in which he

must go, he can not go! Florence is not yet ready for her great preacher. The city must listen a little longer to Mariano.

But if the people were not yet ready for their preacher, neither was the preacher ready for the people. He had not yet found his true voice. He could not speak his message. His vision was not yet clear and complete. He must go out from the city into the village of Tuscany where, in the mountains, like Moses and Elijah, he shall receive more fully the word which God will have him speak.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE VILLAGES OF TUSCANY.

It was a keen disappointment to Savonarola that his first attempt at preaching in Florence was such a failure. With bowed head, and hood drawn tightly about his face, he went to his cell with a heavy heart. If he had been a man without a message it would have been different. But he had a message, and he knew it. The "spreading wings" he saw always as a dark cloud looming up in the south. No man could see clearly what he saw without having a message.

The trouble was he could not speak out what was within him. For some reason he did not as yet have power to challenge and hold the attention of the people. Perhaps this was in part because of his harsh and unfamiliar Lombard speech, so different from the soft, musical rhythmic speech of Tuscany. The form of his address, too, may have had something to do with his failure. The tricks of oratory he could not endure. Besides, he preached from an unfamiliar book—the Bible. Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas the people knew about. But Moses and Isaiah, St. John and St. Paul! To such writings as these men had given little concern. Savonarola preached the great themes of the Bible. The very language of

the Bible he quoted much in his sermons. His was an earnest, straightforward, and, at times, impassioned message, vitally related to the life of the men and women about him. But he was not yet the medium through whom God could speak to Florence of her wickedness in high places and the foulness lurking in the dark.

The ideal preacher of Florence was Fra Mariano. He preached the sort of a sermon that the gay city enjoyed. "I went to hear him," writes the refined and learned Poliziano to a friend, "feeling badly disposed, and mistrustful of the great praises I had heard of him. But no sooner did I enter the church than the preacher's appearance, his habit and his face, wrought a revulsion in my feelings, and I at once desired and expected great things. I confess to thee, that he frequently seemed to soar to a gigantic height in the pulpit, far beyond all human proportions. And now, behold, he begins to speak! I am all ears to the musical voice, the chosen words, the grand sentences. Then I note the clauses, recognize the periods, am swayed by their harmonious cadence." This was the preacher for pleasure-loving Florence. He had a musical voice, his words were well chosen, and what "grand sentences" he spoke! And then to think of the "clauses," "the periods," and the "harmonious cadences!" Florence asked nothing better of a preacher than this. Mariano completely overshadowed every other preacher of the city. The leaders, politicians and devotees of Plato, heard him with delight. Everybody else followed them.

It was the wonderful popularity of this Fra Mariano which led a friend of Savonarola to say to him one day not long after his failure in San Lorenzo, "Father, one can not deny that your doctrine is true, useful and necessary; but your manner of delivering it lacks grace, especially as it is daily compared with that of Fra Mariano." Stung by the covert suggestion, Savonarola replied rather impatiently, "These verbal eloquences and ornaments will have to give way to sound doctrine simply preached." Meanwhile Mariano's popularity increased. His "grand sentences" and periods of "harmonious cadence" attracted and held the people. That polished style of his! Who in Florence could resist it? "His words, phrases and gestures were all studied; his lines from the Latin poets were declaimed with much eloquence; and he was lavish of quotations from Plato and Aristotle. His sermons were copied from the orations of Ficino to the Platonic Academy, which were then considered models of highest eloquence; he frequently recounted laughable anecdotes, and used every device to swell the number of his hearers."

Savonarola, though humiliated, was not disheartened. He went to his cell and devoted himself to the study of the Bible with greater enthusiasm than ever. The prophets loomed big before him and he saw again how they fought against ingratitude and against sin. He waited much in prayer. He kept long vigils. At last a vision came to him. The present and future calamities of the Church passed before his eyes and he heard a voice charging him to preach.

At about this time he was sent by his superior to Reggio, a little town in the extreme northern part of Italy, to attend a chapter meeting of his brotherhood. On the journey disquieting news came to him of war breaking out against his native city of Ferrara. He knew the cause to be the greed and ambition of the man called to be the head of the Church. In a spirit of holy indignation he could hardly contain, he arrived at Reggio. The chapter meeting was attended not only by Dominican Brothers, but by a large company of ecclesiastics, and by laymen distinguished in letters and science. The man who claimed most attention was Pico della Mirandola. This prodigy, still in his teens, was easily the center of attraction. Distinguished scholars bowed before him and he received the homage of the highest dignitaries of the Church. His precocity and marvelous memory excited the astonishment of all. It was said of him later that he was acquainted with not less than twenty-two different languages. In fact he devoted himself to the study of all languages and of all tongues for which teachers and grammars could be found. Imitating the Platonists of Alexandria he sought to harmonize theology and philosophy, and even attempted to reconcile paganism with Christianity. It seems almost ludicrous, but in 1486 he went to Rome and proposed a philosophical tournament. Nine hundred propositions were issued, including all questions in all the sciences. With rare complacency he announced his readiness to reply to all comers. He even sent invitations to men of learning in all countries to visit Rome and ques-

tion him concerning any or all of his propositions. The tournament was suddenly brought to an end by Pope Innocent VIII, who condemned the questions, the whole nine hundred of them.

It is probable that Pico's vast erudition was not what his friends claimed and that his literary ability was greatly overrated. Nevertheless, his quickness of mind; his wonderful memory; the varied brilliancy of his conversation; his nobility and grace; his youthful beauty; the fair hair falling in thick curls on his shoulders; everything about him, in short, attracted sympathy and helped to advance his reputation. He was the man who was the center of attraction for all the distinguished scholars attending the chapter at Reggio. At that moment, fresh from the universities of Bologna and Ferrara, where he had completed his studies in theology and philosophy, he was at the height of his youthful beauty and already renowned for his eloquence.

Not much chance for Savonarola to speak out his thoughts before such a company as this, but he was there to represent San Marco, and he waited ready to speak if commanded. Silent he sat among his brother monks, yet there was something about his appearance which there, as everywhere, attracted attention. He was a man of medium height and dark complexion; he had gray eyes, aquiline nose, and large mouth; his thick lips spoke purpose of stubborn firmness; his forehead was marked with deep furrows that told of serious thought; there was no line of beauty in his countenance, but a benevolent charm and a

severe nobility of character which inspired confidence.

While the discussions were taken up with ritual and dogma Savonarola sat silent and apparently unconcerned. But when a question of morals and discipline was touched upon he rose to his feet. All eyes were fastened upon him! Now for the first time he spoke his convictions with power. The soul of the man expressed itself in every gesture and movement. With radiant countenance, eyes darting flashes of lightning, his warning struck like hot thunderbolts. His hearers were transfixed with amazement. Pico della Mirandola, who heard him that day, confessed him to be a wonderful man, gifted with a mysterious moral force, and said, "Here is a man who once known can never be forgotten." From that day Pico became the friend of Savonarola. To Lorenzo the Magnificent he sent a message expressing his belief that the eloquent monk would contribute much to the glory of Florence, and urged Lorenzo to invite him to make there his permanent home. But Savonarola was not yet ready to speak his message in Florence. He returned to the city when the chapter meeting was over, but gave himself with enthusiasm to the further study of the Bible and to the work in which he was always successful, the instruction of the novices.

An event of great moment to Italy and the Christian Church occurred now, in the death of Sixtus IV. Righteous souls rejoiced in the beginning of better days for Christianity. No one dreamed that a worse pope could come to the

papal chair than Sixtus, who had so outrageously disgraced the tiara and all else he touched. It was now that Savonarola wrote a poetic prayer addressed to Jesus Christ:

> "Ah! look with pity on Thy storm-beaten bride,
> Look on the blood that must be shed;
> Unless Thy merciful hand,
> The hand ever ready to pardon,
> Will not restore her to the peace
> Of past day of poverty."

The result of the conclave in the election of Innocent VIII startled even the pleasure-loving priests and smooth-tongued orators of the Lenten season. It seemed incredible! But in Florence as well as in Rome, the names of the cardinals who had sold their votes were freely discussed, as well as the prices paid. Many pious souls would gladly have gone back to the days of Sixtus. Catholic writers make sad work in trying to offer any apology whatever for Innocent VIII. It was notorious that in his day the Roman court became the center of sensuality and scandalous living. With religion openly threatened and humanity dishonored, men waited with bated breath what doom might yet be reserved for poor Italy.

The storm of emotion which swept the soul of Savonarola can not be described. It is hard even to imagine. Fortunately he got out of Florence; got where he could breathe, away from the frightful surroundings which daily reminded him of the great scandal of Rome. He was sent to San Gemignano. The people here were simple folk who had not yet learned that the true test of a

sermon was in its "grand sentences and periods of harmonious cadence." They did know something of the political conditions in Italy, and they knew also that there was something wrong with the Church. They had a vague sense that the times were out of joint. Here it was, and in speaking to this people, that the thoughts which had so long filled Savonarola's soul definitely voiced themselves and became a real message. He sounded here the spiritual battle-cry which had come to him after seeing the vision of the calamities about to fall upon the Church. He boldly announced that the Church would be scourged; that it would be regenerated; and that all this would come to pass speedily. This announcement was not made as a vision; it was a conclusion supported by rational argument and on the authority of the Bible. The scourge of God's wrath must come! It could not be otherwise. The transgressions of His people compelled it.

Here then at San Gemignano Savonarola discovered that he had a message for men outside the monastery. He had oftentimes stirred the blood and fired the consciences of the novices with his burning words; he had powerfully portrayed the scandalous corruption of the Church to brother monks and the learned men at Reggio; but his message in both instances was in the language of the schools. At San Gemignano he spoke the language of the people, and brought a message to the people. What he did was not very unlike what Wyclif had done in England a century before, and what Martin Luther did a little later in Ger-

many,—he brought the great word and message of God to the common people. His was a strange eloquence, wholly unfamiliar. The people had never heard anything like it; they were in ecstasy; they were moved. God's prophet had spoken to them. It was here at San Gemignano that Savonarola found his true vocation.

When Fra Girolamo returned to Florence it was with a new calm and confidence. He could wait now, for he knew that somehow, in God's good time, "the spreading wings" would be broken. He re-entered upon his work as lecturer to the novices with increased confidence in the heavenly vision, and with a strong conviction that through the preaching of the Book, and through this only, men would be brought to right living.

The Lenten season of 1486 found Savonarola at Brescia, a town some two hundred miles north of Florence, just at the foot of the Alps. If the Lenten season the year before at San Gemignano had been eventful, this one at Brescia was even more so. The man was being guided to his God-appointed work. His theme in this series of sermons was the Book of Revelation. With fervent words and commanding tone he spoke with a voice which sometimes seemed to the people the voice of thunder. He reproved sin, denounced the corruptions of the time, and pointed out the impending threatenings of God's wrath. "Your city here," he declared, "will fall a prey to raging foes; you will see rivers of blood in the streets; wives will be torn from their husbands, virgins ravished, and children murdered before their mothers' eyes. All

will be terror and fire and bloodshed." Then, with a persuasive eloquence, never forgotten by the people who heard him, he exhorted to repentance; he described God's mercy and infinite forgiveness. It was a voice from the other world. When the sermons were done, there was no talk in Brescia but of the wonderful preacher.

A quarter of a century later, when the bloodthirsty soldiers of Gaston de Foix slaughtered six thousand people in Brescia, there were many who remembered Fra Girolamo's message of warning. All Italy soon heard that a new prophet had risen up in the north. Savonarola could no longer doubt his mission. He preached in Genoa, and later in Pavia and in Bologna. Shortly before going to Genoa he wrote a letter to his mother which is strikingly suggestive of his spirit and purpose at this time. "I have renounced the world, and have become a laborer in my Master's vineyard in many cities, not only to save my own soul, but the souls of other men. If the Lord have intrusted the talent to me, I must needs use it as He wills; and seeing that He hath chosen me for this sacred office, rest ye content that I must fulfill it far from my native place, for I bear better fruit than I could have borne at Ferrara. There it would be with me as it was with Christ, when his countrymen said, 'Is not this man a carpenter, and a son of a carpenter?' But out of my own place it has never been said to me; rather, when I have to depart, men and women shed tears, and hold my words in much esteem." He perhaps had in mind here the leave-taking after the Lenten season at

Brescia. "I thought to have written only a few lines, but love hath caused my pen to run on, and I have opened my heart to you far more than was my purpose. Know, then, that this heart of mine is more than ever bent on devoting soul and body, and all the knowledge granted to me by God, to His service and to my neighbor's salvation; and since this work was not to be done in my own land, I am fain to perform it elsewhere. Encourage all to righteous living. I depart for Genoa this day."

After preaching in these cities of the North Savonarola yielded to the invitation of Lorenzo and returned to Florence. Little did Lorenzo know whom he was inviting to come. He thought it was a friend of his own true friend, Pico della Mirandola. Had he known what a foe of tyranny Savonarola was, and how he would destroy the power of his own house, the invitation would not have been sent. There was just one prophet in Northern Italy at that time to whom God had given a message against the corruptions of the age, and there was just one city where the prophet's message could be spoken to the best advantage. The prophet was Savonarola; the city, Florence.

CHAPTER VI.

LORENZO AND HIS CITY.

The house of the Medici, renowned in Florentine history and illustrious in Europe, was at the zenith of its power and influence during the rule of Lorenzo the Magnificent. For our present purpose the first member of the house we need to know about is Giovanni, a wealthy merchant-prince of Florence in the early part of the fifteenth century. It was this Giovanni who amassed the fortune which brought the family into prominence. He was the richest banker of his day in all Italy.

The history of Florence has been divided into four periods: first, the heroic stage, from 1183 to 1321; second, the leveling stage, from 1321 to 1382; third, the reactionary or aristocratic stage, from 1382 to 1434; fourth, the Medicean, or servile, stage. The third period was marked by the rule of a burgher aristocracy, made possible by certain families coming to quick riches. There was much of disorder in this period, for it was one of transition. During part of the time Florence was the seat of the papacy. In 1419 Pope Martin V took up his residence in Florence, and thus made it the center of Christendom. Guicciardini, in his "History of Florence," maintains that the government at this epoch was the wisest, the most glorious, and the happiest the city had ever known. The Renais-

sance was dawning and Florence was full of scholars and artists patronized by the government.

The great and ruling family of this period was the Albizzi, which finally fell before the rapidly growing strength and influence of Giovanni de' Medici, whose fortune and extensive banking interests throughout Central and Northern Italy, and even in Rome and Switzerland, made it possible for him to wield a power almost irresistible. This Giovanni was in his day the Rothschild of Italy. He had a happy way of making private liberalities add to his prestige in politics, and he had learned the art of using political prestige for the purpose of bringing florins to his banks. Great financial advantage came to him through his friendly relations with the papal court. When Pope John XXIII went to the Council of Constance, Giovanni accompanied him; and through pontifical preferment had charge of the banking interests of the council. This was a source of immense revenue for the rich banker. On returning to Florence, his wealth vastly increased, Giovanni was more careful than ever to augment his popularity by liberal giving. Individuals were helped by him, churches and charitable institutions were in some instances almost dependent upon him, and in critical moments he came to the relief of the government itself. There were whispers of "conscience money" at times, but Giovanni was doing much for the glory of Florence, and the wealthy banker was not seriously hurt by small criticism.

It ought to be kept in mind that the Medici did not at any time rule in Florence as the Este

did in Ferrara, or the Sforza in Milan. They were not officers of the government at all. They were the power behind the government. They were known simply as citizens; but their power was recognized everywhere as absolute.

On the death of Giovanni, Cosimo his son, afterwards known as the "Father of his Country," was banished from the city. But even in banishment his name and power were such that he was everywhere treated as a royal guest. He enriched every city he visited. His stay in Venice was celebrated by building a library for the Benedictines. Michelozzo was the architect. In less than a year a Signory was chosen in Florence favorable to the Medici, and Cosimo returned to his native city, "carried back," as he said, "to his country upon the shoulders of all Italy." He saw the house of the Albizzi in ruins, and entered in triumph his own palace in the Via Larga. Florence was now in the firm grasp of the "thin dark-faced merchant." For three whole centuries, dating from this triumphant entry, the history of Florence was connected with that of the house of Medici.

The foreign policy inaugurated by Cosimo was something entirely new for Florence. He began by devising plans to put a stop to the wars which for so long had been devastating fair Italy. First of all, he allied himself with the house of Sforza in Milan, giving lavishly of his money to make strong his hold upon so important a city. The understanding between Florence and Milan was not looked upon with favor by the Florentine people; nor did they regard with more favor the agreement

entered into later with Naples. But this triple alliance, as against Rome and Venice, did much to preserve the balance of power in Italy for many years.

Cosimo was a successful man of business, an ideal husband and father, and apparently a kindly fellow-citizen to all. He was particularly fond of the society of artists and men of letters; Brunelleschi and Michelozzo, Donatello and Fra Filippo Lippi, to name only a few intimately connected with him, found in him the most generous and deserving of patrons. Many of the early Renaissance churches and convents in Florence and its neighborhood were built through his munificence. San Lorenzo, San Marco, and the Badia of Fiesole, are the most typical. He even founded a hospital in Jerusalem. Why should one complain of the business or political methods of a man so generous and public spirited? One of the remarks of this shrewd and far-sighted merchant-prince, when it was gently hinted that he was putting much money into public buildings, was this: "I know the humors of this city; fifty years will not pass before we are driven out; but the buildings will remain."

It was Cosimo, as previously stated, who founded the great library in San Marco. He did much for letters. The new learning commanded his admiration and generous support. "To Cosimo," says Burkhardt, "belongs the special glory of recognizing in the Platonic philosophy the fairest flower of the ancient world of thought, of inspiring his friends with the same belief, and thus of fostering within humanistic circles themselves

another and higher resuscitation of antiquity." It was Cosimo who founded the far-famed Platonic Academy of Florence, the center of the richest Italian thought of the century.

Cosimo was succeeded by his son, Piero, a man of shattered health, who had little taste for government. His rule was short. He died in 1469, and was buried in the sacristy of San Lorenzo. A beautiful monument by Verrochio marks the spot.

The reigns of government were now taken up by his eldest son, the brilliant young Lorenzo, a man of quite different type from his father. "The second day after the death of my father," writes Lorenzo in his diary, "although I, Lorenzo, was very young, in fact only in my twenty-first year, the leading men of the city and of the ruling party came to our house to express their sorrow for our misfortune, and to persuade me to take upon myself the charge of the government of the city, as my grandfather and father had already done. This proposal being contrary to the instincts of my age, and entailing great labor and danger, I accepted against my will, and only for the sake of protecting my friends and our fortunes, for in Florence one can ill live in the possession of wealth without control of the government."

There are three paintings in Florence strikingly suggestive of the life of Lorenzo. The first is a fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli. It represents him as a gallant boy in the Riccardi palace, the palace of his father and grandfather, riding under a bay tree and crowned with roses. The second is Botticelli's famous Adoration of the Magi, in which

Lorenzo is seen in the prime of early manhood. The third is what Gardner describes as "that truly terrible picture of Vasari in the Uffizi." In this painting Lorenzo is fully developed, the omniscient and all-embracing tyrant. Lorenzo's face, as seen here, is as eloquent a protest against the iniquity of tyranny as can be found in the pages of the most "terrible" of Savonarola's sermons.

Lorenzo's determination to be the absolute master of Florence was apparent from the beginning. He took pains to strengthen the alliance with the ruling house in Milan. After the failure of the Pazzi conspiracy he acted with tyrannical promptness, and in such a way as to leave himself "securely enthroned above the splash of blood." At great personal risk he went voluntarily to Naples and made peace with Ferdinand, the infamous tyrant of that city. It has been suggested, and probably with good reason, that Botticelli's noble allegory of the olive-decked "Pallas Taming the Centaur" of war and disorder appears to have been painted in commemoration of this event. By a change in the laws, through which a Council of Seventy was created to control the election of the Signory, the government was placed absolutely in Lorenzo's hands. The older councils still remained and the Republican form of government was continued. Had Lorenzo lived longer, changes might have been introduced, but for the time being he had everything he needed. Besides, the people were satisfied and that counted for something. It made government easier. "Florence," writes Guicciardini, "could not have had a better or more delightful tyrant."

Lorenzo won great reputation through his foreign policy. The East and the West united to praise him. The sultan honored him with presents, and sent ambassadors to declare his friendship; Egypt did the same; the princes of Germany treated him as an equal; so also did the King of France. When foreign invasion was imminent, Lorenzo succeeded in preserving the balance of power between the five great Italian States, so that they might present a united front against a common foe. If Lorenzo had had his grandfather's genius for making money, and for the management of large financial interests, he could have done more for the State than he did. But he seems to have had no care for commercial affairs at all, and his large inherited fortune provided small income with which to gratify his tastes. He sometimes found it necessary to help himself from the public purse; and he did it without showing any such public spirit as Cosimo. This element of weakness in Lorenzo ought to be kept in mind, as it led to much suspicion in many quarters. His strained relations with Pope Sixtus IV have already been referred to. Reference has also been made to the increased power which came to him through the failure of the conspiracy of the Pazzi. On the whole Florence under Lorenzo's administration was prosperous. The industries, the commerce, and the public works of the city, were the delight of the prosperity-loving Florentines. Even the peasantry were far more comfortably situated than in neighboring republics.

When Pope Innocent VIII came to the papal

throne Lorenzo made friends with him, and through this friendship obtained a cardinal's hat for his son Giovanni, then only fourteen years of age. This boy-cardinal afterwards became Pope Leo X, whose bull Martin Luther burned at Wittenberg.

The crowning glory of Lorenzo's rule in Florence was his patronage of letters and art. His own palace was turned into a school, and was made the resort of illustrious men from all parts of the world. It was here that Ficino, Poliziano, and Pico della Mirandola conversed concerning the noble thoughts of Plato and Aristotle. It was here, too, that Michael Angelo began to try his chisel. But Lorenzo was more than a patron. His distinction as compared with every other Mæcenas known to history, lay in his active participation in the intellectual labors he promoted. He was one of the leading spirits among the literati of his time, and was a prose writer of no mean ability. It is to his lasting fame that he was a leader in the movement to break away from the erudite language of scholars and revive the national literature. This was done by recurring to the primitive sources of the spoken tongue and popular verse. He was one of the first to raise popular poetry to the dignity of art. True, he prostituted his powers by writing lewd carnival songs to be sung on the streets by the young nobles, and all this for the purpose of corrupting the people, that they might not know to what extent they had lost their liberties.

The many-sidedness of Lorenzo, the good here

and the bad there, is still a perplexity. The strange contrasts in the life of the man are as unintelligible as they are striking. He was equally at home, so it is said, in the Platonic academy disputing on the nature of virtue, in the society of artists discussing the theory of beauty and its exemplification in the creations of the Italian painters and sculptors, in the garden of San Marco contemplating with satisfaction his own work in advancing at once the fine arts and the interests of religion, and in the carnival joining in the wildest orgies of its votaries. Villari is authority for the statement that after hours of strenuous labor over some new law, framed to crush any lingering remains of liberty, or after passing some new decree of confiscation or sentence of death, he would repair to the Platonic Academy and take part in heated discussions on virtue and the immortality of the soul; then go about the town to sing his *"Canti Carnascialeschi"* in the company of dissolute youths and indulge in the lowest debauchery. After this he would return home, receiving Pico and Poliziano at his table, and vie with them in reciting verses and discoursing on the poetic art; and whatever was the occupation of the moment, he threw himself into it as heartily as though it were the sole purpose of his life.

Nothing gave greater distinction to the Florence of Lorenzo's day than the Platonic Academy. This, it will be remembered, was not created by him, but by his grandfather, Cosimo. Lorenzo did, however, take great pride in the academy, and fostered it in every possible way. He was himself

an earnest student of Plato and found much delight in the discussions which went on in his favorite School of Philosophers.

The purpose in founding the academy was to establish in Florence a rival of the ancient academy which had won such glory for Greece, and had been so effective in propagating Platonic ideas. Marsilio Ficino, the high priest of the new "religion of love and beauty," had shown an ardent love for Plato even in boyhood, and had written works on his philosophy while still a youth in his teens. Intrusted with the presidency of the academy, he had mastered the Greek language, read the "Doctrine of Ideas" in the original, and made extensive commentaries on all Plato's writings. His veneration for the great Greek philosopher amounted almost to worship. He always kept a lamp burning before the bust of Plato.

The manner in which Ficino mixed his Platonism and Christianity was sometimes quite amusing. For instance, in attempting to demonstrate the truth of Christ's teaching and explain His divine mission, he uses this argument: "The coming of Christ was frequently prophesied by the Sybils; the verses in which Virgil foretold it are known to all. Plato, on being asked how long the precepts of his philosophy would endure, replied: 'Until the coming of Him by whom the source of all truth will be unsealed.' Porphyry says in his Responses: The Gods declare Christ to be highly pious and religious, and affirm that he was an immortal, testifying of him very benignantly." Rather a doubtful apologist for the Christian faith! To

this man and his school came scholars from all parts of Italy, from the North and from the South. Ambitious students came also from Germany, from France, and from Spain. The lectures which Ficino delivered in the academy were the subject of conversation in every company of scholars throughout Europe. Had he not discovered a system of philosophy reconciling Christianity and paganism? No wonder the scholastic world did him honor and reverence! And no wonder Florence came to enviable eminence because of the famous academy it fostered.

It was on the invitation of Lorenzo, tyrant and philosopher, that Savonarola now turned his face toward Florence with the purpose of making there his permanent home. He crossed the Apennines on foot, traversing the same road by which he had come eight years before. It was a hot summer day, and he was fatigued in mind and body as he walked toward the city where he had received such small welcome. There is a story that when he had almost fainted in his journey, a mysterious stranger appeared who restored his courage and strength, led him to a hospice, gave him food, and accompanied him to Florence. On reaching the San Gallo gate the stranger said, "Remember to do that for which God hath sent thee," and then disappeared.

It was soon told throughout the city that the preaching friar who had suddenly leaped into such fame in the cities of the North was in Florence, and that he had come at the expressed wish of Lorenzo. Many were curious to hear the new preacher. But

Savonarola waited. Back in San Marco again, he took up once more the instruction of the novices. Soon others besides the novices asked for the privilege of hearing him. The audience increasing daily, the place of the meeting was changed to the convent garden. Almost without his knowing it, the lectures were transformed into sermons, and the garden became too small for the people who desired to hear him. Urged to try the pulpit again and preach in the Church, where larger audiences might hear him, he hesitated, and finally asked that prayers be offered that he might be wisely guided. Unable longer to resist entreaty or satisfy his own conscience, he made the following announcement one Saturday afternoon in the cloister garden, standing under a damask rose tree. "To-morrow we will speak in the Church, and give a lecture and a sermon." And he added, so it is said, "I shall preach for eight years." Was this prophecy or coincidence? He did preach for just eight years, and then his voice was silenced.

The scene in the cloister garden is nowhere more beautifully described than in one of Mrs. Oliphant's appreciative chapters. This gifted woman seems to see so clearly the meaning of it all. "Never," she writes, "was there a more touching, tender incongruity than that perfumed canopy of bloom above the dark hair covered with its cowl. Beneath the blue sky that hung over Florence, within the wide square of the cloister with all its arching pillars, with Angelo's Dominic close by, kneeling at the cross-foot, and listening, too—this crowd of Florentines gathered in the glorious in-

closure encircling the scholars and their master. A painter could not desire a more striking scene. The roses waving softly in the summer air above, and the lads in their white convent gowns, with earnest faces lifted to the speaker—what a tender central light do they give, soft heart of the flowers and youth, to the grave scene! For grave as life and death were the speaker and the men that stood around and pressed him on every side. Before long he had to consent, which he did with reluctance, to leave this quiet cloister and return to the pulpit where once his Lombard accent had brought him nothing but contempt and failure. Thus the first chapter of Fra Girolamo's history ends, under the damask rose-tree in the warm July weather, within those white cloisters of San Marco. In the full eye of day, in the pulpit and the public places of Florence, as prophet, spiritual leader, apostle among men, was the next period of his life to be passed. Here his probation ends."

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW VOICE IN THE DUOMO.

The day after the announcement under the damask rose-tree in the cloister garden found Savonarola in the pulpit of the Church of San Marco. This was Sunday, August 1, 1489. The church was crowded. Representatives of all classes improved the opportunity to hear the preacher whose name was now frequently mentioned on street and in market place. Many, no doubt, who had gone away disappointed from the Church of San Lorenzo eight years before, were now in San Marco to see and hear for themselves, and find out, if possible, what change had come over Fra Girolamo. Some were there merely to satisfy curiosity.

The series of sermons begun in the rose-tinted garden was continued. The theme was the Apocalypse, and the preacher was at his best. His hour of opportunity had come and he must improve it. He had fought a hard battle, struggling against doubts and fears, but his decision had been made; he had mounted the pulpit that morning with clear vision of duty, and with firm conviction that he was there as the ambassador of Jesus Christ. Even before he spoke the audience seemed to feel the presence of a strong and powerful personality. His voice, it is said, resounded at times with almost supernatural effect. His intellectual power aston-

ished his hearers, and they were thrilled and moved by the contagion of his enthusiasm.

There was no doubt about his mission after that morning. The news of the new voice and the wonderful message passed from lip to lip throughout Florence. Men began to forsake Plato to discuss the words and personality of the new preacher. Opinions were divided. Some declared that the preacher was only a fanatic, who by his rare voice and power as an orator swayed the people; others went so far as to say that his was no eloquence at all, the effect on the crowd being brought about by a combination of loud words and striking imagery; the men of the academy inclined to the view that the preacher, though a man of remarkable natural ability, was after all unlearned in the language and thought of the schools, and that therefore his influence would only be transitory. Savonarola heard all these criticisms, but, in the pulpit at least, paid no attention to them. What the academy said was undoubtedly a keen thrust which must have hurt him. Perhaps this was what led him to take advantage of printer's ink. He published now several of his sermons, a tractate on philosophy which was in part a compendium of his lectures to the novices, and two or three brief pamphlets on what he considered essential theology. Whatever may have been his purpose in issuing these volumes at this time, they certainly had a wonderful influence in silencing criticism. The men of the academy knew after reading these writings that a master mind was influencing the people who thronged San Marco.

It was just nine years after the first arrival in Florence that Savonarola entered the pulpit of the great cathedral of the city, known as the Duomo. As lecturer in the cloister garden, and preacher in the Church of San Marco, his fame had been rapidly increasing. The man and his sermons had become an absorbing topic of conversation. The Duomo was now a necessity. No other building in all Florence was large enough to hold the people. Fra Mariano's day was done. His "grand sentences and periods of harmonious cadence" had served their time. The people would hear the new voice. Earnest looking men and women they were who crowded into the Duomo. They were there to hear a preacher who had eyes to see the age in which he lived, and courage to declare what he saw. Such a preacher will always have an audience. Savonarola broke every homiletical rule of his time. He fearlessly trampled upon every oratorical standard set up by the professors of sacred rhetoric. In the pulpit he cared for just one thing. He would bring to his hearers *the living word and message of God.* That thing he did. The pulpit was his throne. In the first sermons in the Duomo the people recognized the new sovereignty. Like the prophets of Israel and Judah, he came with a message divine. Amos and Isaiah had not stronger conviction that they spoke by the command of Jehovah.

The three famous propositions, which he had announced with such fervor and burning passion at San Gemignano, and later at Brescia, he now reiterated within the walls of the great Duomo. First, *the Church will be scourged.* Second, *it will be*

regenerated. Third, *all this will come to pass speedily.* These three propositions included all the themes of Savonarola's preaching. The necessity for the impending scourge he saw in the unblushing immorality, widespread skepticism, and intolerable oppression of the times. The scourge, he said, would come upon all. The immoral literati he condemned as unsparingly as he did the corrupt contadini. He attacked the gambler of the palace, the parlor, and the club with as fierce invective as he did the dice-thrower of the street. The money-lenders, with their unjust bargains and cruel exactions, he denounced with scathing words. "Children of the devil," he branded them.

The democracy of Savonarola's preaching was apparent from the beginning. He threw himself with tremendous enthusiasm against the idea that there is one standard for the religious life, another for social life, and still another for political life. In his philosophy and Christian teaching they were all one. Religious, social, and political life, all were one before God! What he wanted, and no thinking man heard him without feeling that what he wanted was right, was to bring Christianity down into the market-place, to apply its principles in society, and to bring political life into harmony with its standards. The skepticism and corrupt lives of the men recognized as leaders in the academy and in the government of Florence he condemned unsparingly.

The enthusism and excitement created by his sermons seem to have led Savonarola to question whether he had not undertaken too great a

program. He had spoken awful words concerning the judgments of God which would come upon the wicked city of Florence. He had told the people, on the authority of reason, on the authority of the Bible, and on the authority of the visions of the Lord which had come to him, that the gilded vice of the city must be put away and Florence purged of its corruptions, or the fierce judgments of the Almighty would come upon the people and the wrath of outraged Heaven smite them. Perhaps he had gone too far! In a book published later, entitled "A Compendium of Revelations," he describes the great miseries of soul experienced during the second week of these Lenten sermons. He tells how all that kept him from his principal study became quickly distasteful, and that whenever he thought of entering upon another path, he became instantly hateful to himself. "I remember," he writes, "when I was preaching in the Duomo in 1491, and had already composed my sermon upon these visions, I determined to omit all mention of them, and never recur to the subject again. God is my witness how I watched and prayed the whole of Saturday and throughout the night; but all other ways, all doctrines save this, were denied me. Towards break of dawn, being weary and dejected by my long vigil, I heard, as I prayed, a voice saying to me: 'Fool, dost thou not see that it is God's will that thou shouldst continue in the same path?' Wherefore that day I preached a terrible sermon."

An autograph summary of this sermon is still preserved in the museum of San Marco. It is bound in a codex with a number of others preached

the same year. One of the most striking passages in it is an arraignment of the clergy. Terrible words, indeed, are used by the fearless preacher. He describes how the greed of gold has led the clergy to forget the inner life of the spirit; the outer ceremonies of the Church, in which there is for them traffic and gold, these they gave careful attention to; the services of the Church which most minister to the spiritual life, but in which there is no opportunity for gain, these they neglect. "Fathers," said he, "make sacrifice to this false idol, urging their sons to enter the ecclesiastical life, in order to obtain benefices and prebends; and thus ye hear it said, 'Blessed is the house that owns a fat cure.' But I say unto you a time will come when rather it will be said, Woe to that house; and ye will feel the edge of the sword upon you. Do as I bid you; rather let your sons follow the way of all others, than undertake the religious life for gain. In these days there is no grace, no gift of the Holy Spirit that may not be bought and sold. On the other hand, the poor are oppressed by grievous burdens, and when they are called to pay sums beyond their means, the rich cry unto them, Give me the rest. There be some who, having but an income of fifty, pay a tax of one hundred, while the rich pay little, since the taxes are imposed at their pleasure. When widows come weeping, they are bidden to go to sleep. When the poor complain, they are told to pay and pay again."

This paragraph is characteristic. Savonarola scorned the idea of taking up the ecclesiastical life for the money there was in it, and looked with

horror upon the buying and selling of the gifts of God. He had a heart of sympathy for the oppressed; the widows and orphans commanded his care and help; but the rich, in their heartless discriminations and injustices, he condemned. "Bethink ye well, O rich, for affliction shall smite you. This city shall no more be called Florence, but a den of thieves, of turpitude and bloodshed. Then shall you all be poverty stricken, all wretched, and your name, O priests, shall be changed into a terror. I sought no longer to speak in thy name, O Lord; but Thou hast overpowered me, hast conquered me. Thy word has become like unto a fire within me, consuming the very marrow of my bones. Therefore, I am derided and despised of my people. But I cried unto the Lord day and night, and I say unto you, I know that unheard of times are at hand."

It is clear from the above passage that the preacher had definite knowledge of what the bad leadership of Florence actually was. The rich cared nothing for the liberties of the people, and the highest ambition of the priests was personal gain. What could be hoped for from such leadership as this? Savonarola acknowledged that there was small chance of getting many converts to his views, but he was God's prophet, and must needs speak the message which had been given him. "When Jesus came to redeem the world He found hearers in Judea alone, and even there the faithful were few, but He called them to Him on the mount, and afterwards, by their means He transformed the human race." "You forsake me, deride me," said he, "yet

shall I gain a few disciples, who will give all up for Christ's sake. They will ask neither benefices nor prebends; will accept neither gifts nor alms but only their daily bread. They will dress like the poor; they will not seek the great; they will not run after the magistrates in the palace; they will not build up houses; they will not visit women daily to carry them images and rosaries; they will be truthful; they will climb the mount of faith; they will have revelations from heaven and more learning, not however, the learning of Scotus or the poets, but that of their own conscience and of Holy Writ." In this description of the type of disciples Savonarola desired to create, one is reminded of the poor priests of John Wyclif who introduced into England a new type of parson, the type immortalized by Chaucer in the lines:

> "Christes lore and His apostles twelve
> He taught, but first He followed it himselve."

These Lenten sermons gave to Savonarola undisputed claim to the one great pulpit of Florence. His mastership and spiritual leadership in this pulpit were acknowledged by all. The men who had been the recognized leaders of Florence were, it is true, secretly against him. They saw, as Savonarola saw, that an irresistible conflict was bound to take place; nay was now on. In March of this year he wrote a significant letter to Fra Dominico who was then preaching at Pisa. This Dominico was one of his most faithful followers, and a man whose later devotion and loyalty shine out most gloriously. "Our work," he says, in this letter,

"goes on well, for God helps marvelously, although the chief men of the city are against us, and many feel that we may meet with the fate of Fra Bernardino. I have faith in the Lord; He gives me daily greater courage and perseverance. I preach the regeneration of the Church, taking the Scriptures as my sole guide. Be of good cheer and return quickly, that I may tell you the marvelous deeds of the Lord." The fate of Fra Bernardino, here referred to, was exile. He had preached against usury and paid the penalty of being driven from the city.

As an evidence of the wonderful popularity to which Savonarola came as a result of his first preaching in the Duomo, he was invited in April to preach a sermon before the Signory in the Palazzo Vecchio. The Signory was the governing council of Florence. "I am here," he said, in beginning this address to the city fathers, "I am here in the waters of Tiberias." "In the presence of the Signory I do not feel master of myself as in a church. Therefore, I am constrained to be more measured and urbane, even as Christ in the house of the Pharisees. I must tell you, then, that all the evil and all the good of the city depend from its head; and, therefore, great is his responsibility even for small sins, since, if he followed the right path, the whole city would be sanctified. We, therefore, must fish in this sea with nets that can hold the smallest fish, nor must we employ overmuch caution, but, on the contrary, speak frankly and openly. Tyrants are incorrigible because they are proud, because they love flattery, and because they will not restore ill-gotten gains. They leave all in the hands

of bad ministers; they succumb to flattery; they hearken not unto the poor, and neither do they condemn the rich; they expect the poor and the peasantry to work for them without regard, or suffer their ministers to expect this; they corrupt voters, and farm out the taxes to aggravate the burdens of the people. You must, therefore, remove dissensions, do justice, and exact honesty from all." The reference here to the incorrigibility of tyrants was in such plain terms, that his auditors could not fail to discover that the words were aimed against their favorite, Lorenzo. But the very audacity of the preacher only served to increase his fame.

In July following he was elected Prior of San Marco. He was thus master of the leading pulpit of Florence and of the leading monastery. Now happened an event which made it clearer than ever that a new leader had come to the city of the Medici. It was the custom that when a new Prior of San Marco was appointed, he must go to the Riccardi palace and pay his respects and vow allegiance to the leading representative of the house through whose munificence the monastery had been built, and through which it had so largely benefited. This Savonarola did not do. When leaders among the friars, fearing for him and for the monastery because of the position he was taking, came to him and urged that he pay a visit to Lorenzo, he said, "I consider that my election is owed to God, and to Him alone will I vow obedience." When Lorenzo heard of this he was indignant, and said sarcastically to the informer who brought the news, "A stranger has come into *my house,* yet he will not stoop to pay me a visit." But no sarcastic word of

Lorenzo could hurt the fame of the new preacher. He was rapidly becoming known as the master spirit of Florence. His sermons attracted increasingly large audiences.

No one has ever been able to describe Savonarola's preaching. No one can. During the days of his supremacy, the pulpit of the Duomo was the strongest center of influence in Italy. All classes were held by the matchless preacher. Scholars and artists, artisans and politicians, nobility and contadini, acknowledged the greatness of his message and the mighty power of his words. From the surrounding villages and from distant cities the people thronged to hear him. All night they walked from their homes, and stood in the gray dawn before the Duomo waiting for the hour when the doors would open. No business was transacted in any street of Florence until after the sermon. Crowded in the nave, in the aisles, and in the transepts of the great building; sitting on tiers of temporary seats built up against the walls of the nave, perched upon pillars or hanging under the archways to catch a better view of the preacher's face, the people waited for the hour of the sermon. In prayer they waited or chanted with the choir the Psalm or Litany.

When at last the preacher stood in his pulpit, his white robe marking him a conspicuous figure in the dimly lighted Duomo, every face was pressed a little nearer, and every ear listened to catch the first word. The Bible was at last opened. The text was announced with a voice that reached the farthest man standing at the end of the longest aisle. The preacher wandered for a time, in what seemed a very wilderness of heterogenous ideas.

Theology, politics, morals, and religion, were all brought into contribution. Suddenly the theme touches some point of living interest to himself and his hearers. Fancy begins to play. The voice swells. There is new animation in gesture. Every part of the body seems to move responsive to the touch of some inward passion. Now the preacher feels an arm of strength, which will strike a blow at "the spreading wings!" Images colossal rise before the spell-bound audience. Then lightning flashes. Thunder is heard, and in crashing bolts. Large rain drops begin to fall. The fury of the storm is upon them! The voice of the preacher reverberates to the farthest corner of the Duomo with the thunder of God's wrath. *"The vengeance of the eternal God is hot! From peasant to pope, he will strike sin and break corruption in pieces."* In all parts of the Duomo men fall upon the marble floor. In terror they hide their faces. Dread horror fills the place.

Then there is silence. The stern look fades from the preacher's face: his eyes, softened and suffused, seem lost in some infinite beauty hanging there in the great dome above him! When he speaks his voice is full of sweetness and tenderness, as he describes the infinite mercy of God and His love. Now it is that the reporter's pencil falls from his fingers. He is overcome with agitation. The friends of the preacher think they see the Madonna standing by his side. And above his head a chorus of angels, filling the dome, and hovering under the ceilings of nave and aisle and transept! The multitude is melted. The arches above hear only sobs, and look only upon weeping.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIGHTIEST MAN OF FLORENCE.

It is not strange that the preaching which the people were hearing in the Duomo was displeasing to the man in the Medici palace. Such preaching has always been displeasing to tyrants and political bosses, and to leaders of all sorts who are corrupters of the morals of the people. Lorenzo knew that the doctrine of Fra Girolamo put into practice would mean his overthrow. He must bring the new preacher into his favor. That was the hardest task that Lorenzo ever attempted. Savonarola felt that, as Prior of San Marco and preacher in the chief pulpit of Florence, any recognition of Lorenzo, beyond the demands of courtesy, would be a compromise of principle and fatal to his cause. But Lorenzo was shrewd and he knew how to win men.

Lorenzo began, after the true fashion of the politician, by showing unusual courtesies. He went frequently to hear mass in the Church of San Marco. He walked one day in the cloister garden. The monks were delighted that their monastery was honored by the presence of so noble a guest. They ran excitedly to the prior's cell to tell him of Lorenzo's presence. "Did he inquire for me?" asked the serious-faced preacher, looking up from his annotations. "No," they said. "If he did not ask for me," answered Savonarola, "let him go or

stay at his pleasure." This was all the reply. Nothing daunted, Lorenzo sent rich gifts to the convent. The only allusion to the large benefactions was in a sermon, when the preacher said, "A faithful dog does not give up barking in his master's defense because a bone is thrown to him." To the delight of the monks large pieces of gold were found in the boxes of the monastery. Savonarola, knowing well enough where they came from, ordered them sent to the Good Men of St. Martin, a society whose business it was to care for the poor. "These smaller pieces," he said, "will be enough for us."

Failing by all his usual methods of success, Lorenzo now tried the influence of a committee. Five citizens of noble birth were instructed to visit San Marco to induce the preacher to modify his words. Savonarola received them, perhaps in the chapter-house with Angelo's great fresco of the Crucifixion looking down upon them. These men were such distinguished citizens of Florence that it is worth while to know their names. They were Domenico Bonsi, Guidantonio Vespucci, Paolo Antonio Soderini, Bernardino Rucellai, and Francesco Valori. All of them, with possibly one exception, became afterwards the friends of Savonarola, two of them ardent supporters of his cause. These men, in opening the conversation, sought to give the impression that they had come wholly of their own accord and because of their love for the convent. In the interests of the public good, as they said, they suggested, in a stammering fashion, some slight modifications in the tone of the Prior's preaching.

They also suggested that such criticism of the leaders of Florence as he had been indulging in, might lead to the bringing of the monastery of San Marco into disrepute. They went so far as to suggest the possibility of his not being allowed longer to preach, and even hinted at banishment. "Lorenzo sent you here," said Savonarola. "Go tell him to repent. I fear no sentence of banishment, for this city of yours is like a mustard seed on the earth. But the new doctrine shall triumph, and the old shall fall. Although I be a stranger and he a citizen, and the first in the city, I shall stay, while he will depart." The monk could not be bought. To the amazement of Lorenzo he had at last found a preacher who was incorruptible.

Savonarola's peculiar ascendency over the monks under his spiritual care was such as few men have ever known. His method was to be very frank with them, to open his heart and tell them of his inner thought and his purpose. He gave them to feel that they knew all his plans. One day he said, "It is now twenty-seven months since I began to preach on the Apocalypse. Afterwards, being upon a hill, I looked down thence upon a fortified city, which suddenly, as from an earthquake, began to totter and fall. Its inhabitants were quarreling among themselves. And I bethought me: This city can not have good foundations, nor its citizens charity. I then went down into the valley, and beheld that there were caverns beneath the houses. I began instantly to build a new city on the plain, asking help from the men; but instead of aiding in the work, some carried off the stones, while

others jeered at me, and shot arrows at me from the old walls. Therefore, I would have withdrawn in despair, but the Lord commanded me to persevere." It was hardly necessary for him to explain that the "arrows" shot at him from the old walls were the false teachings of the clergy, and that the "new city" he was building was the city of the spiritual life which would always be assailed by wicked and worldly men. "It is easy," he said, "to lead men to the outer life; to mass, to confession; but hard to guide them to the inner life and dispose them to grace. It is necessary to shun too many ceremonies. These ceremonies are not essential, inasmuch they vary for different times and places. The ancients lived well without them. Now by many ceremonies all is converted into sham and gain, as is proved by the universal greed for benefices. Besides, by its effect is the cause known; and your city having no charity can not have strong foundations. Pray ye, then, in a fervent spirit, so that the Lord may give victory to the new doctrine. Run not after false knowledge, but examine all things by the light of the Scriptures."

Up to this time Lorenzo had posed as a friend of Savonarola, but it was known by those on the inside that he was smarting under the criticisms which came daily from the pulpit of the Duomo. He bethought himself of one last method by which he dared attempt to break the power of the new preacher. Fra Mariano was asked to enter the pulpit again and take up the cudgel against the Dominican in the cathedral pulpit of Florence,

who dared so presumptuously to speak of times and seasons and visions. Fra Mariano was glad to accept the invitation. He undoubtedly felt, and rather keenly, too, his own loss of prestige since the whole city had gone after Savonarola. It was announced, therefore, that on Ascension Day Fra Mariano would preach, in his own convent church at San Gallo, from the words in Matthew, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons." No little excitement was created by this announcement. It was talked of in the shops and on the streets, in council chambers and in the market-place. Lorenzo's intimates among the literati undoubtedly congratulated him on his shrewd move to break the power of his enemy. When the day came the church was crowded. Most of the leading citizens were there. Pico della Mirandola graced the occasion by his presence, Poliziano the president of the academy was there, and even Lorenzo, confident of the crushing defeat the presumptuous prophet of the Duomo would suffer, was among the hearers. It seemed to be the general feeling that somehow Savonarola had come to trial. Many were hoping with Lorenzo that Mariano's sermon would settle for good the visions and prophecies of Fra Girolamo.

The style of this popular court preacher has already been described. Mariano had all the tricks of the persuasive orator. He knew how to wait for the moment, just the right moment, to clinch an argument or strike an opponent. But in this Ascension Day sermon he over-reached himself. In the very beginning of his discourse he branded

Savonarola as a false prophet and accused him of sowing sedition and creating scandal. This was done, too, in such an insolent manner, and in language so coarse and abusive, that the audience left the place, disappointed and disgusted. Fra Mariano had missed his opportunity. Savonarola was stronger than ever.

Chagrined and humiliated Mariano secretly vowed vengeance. What dire wrath was his, and what vengeance he purposed, we shall know later. But he could do nothing in the open now. The series of sermons, of which the first only had been preached on that Ascension Day, was suddenly broken off. Mariano's day in Florence was done. On the following Sunday Savonarola preached from the same text Mariano had used, and to an audience which crowded the Duomo. It is to his credit that he did not use his increased power to wage personal battle against the men who had tried to crush him. Lorenzo undoubtedly considered himself defeated, and no longer tried to interfere with the independence of San Marco or the teachings of the Duomo pulpit. Savonarola, with all the fire and enthusiasm of his great soul, went on with his preaching.

Again and again during these days the preacher cried out against the corrupt manners of the age. He denounced every vice which was notorious at this time. Gambling was singled out for the fiercest invective. The curses he pronounced on all gamblers, whether men or women, are startling and almost frightful. The thunders of God's wrath were in his voice as he threatened and commanded.

Listen to this as a sample: "If you see persons engaged in gambling in these days, believe them to be not Christians, since they are worse than infidels, or ministers of the evil one, and celebrate his rites. They are avaricious men, blasphemers, slanderers, detractors of others' fame; are tyrants; they are hateful to God; are thieves, murderers, and full of all iniquity; I can not permit you to share in these amusements; ye must be steadfast in prayer, continually rendering thanks to the Almighty in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He that gambleth shall be accursed, and accursed he that suffereth others to gamble; shun ye their conversation, for the father that gambles before his son shall be accursed, and accursed the mother that gambles in her daughter's presence. Therefore, whoever thou art, thou shalt be accursed if thou dost gamble or allow others to gamble; thou shalt be accursed, I tell ye, in the city, accursed in the fields; thy corn shall be accursed and thy substance; cursed the fruit of thy land and thy body; thy herds of oxen and thy flocks of sheep; cursed shalt thou be in all thy comings and goings."

He was no less fierce in his denunciation of usury and unlawful gain. "Owing to avarice," he said, "neither you nor your children lead a good life, and you have already discovered many devices for gaining money, and many modes of exchange which ye call just, but are most unjust, and ye have likewise corrupted the magistrates and their functions. None can persuade you that it is sinful to lend at usury, or make unjust bargains; on the contrary you defend yourselves to your soul's dam-

nation. Thou sayest that the good and happy life consists in gain; and Christ says, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Thou sayest that the happy life consists in pleasure and voluptuousness; and Christ says 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Thou sayest the happy life consists in glory; and Christ says 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you.' The way of life hath been shown to you, yet none follows it, none seeks it, none learns it." What a striking contrast is drawn here between the spirit of the sharp business man, out for gain, and the spirit of Christ.

The most powerful impressions made by his preaching were not through his impassioned denunciations of vice and evil-doing, but in his touching and beautiful descriptions of the mercy of God and his love, and in his tender and earnest pleadings with the people to bring their lives into harmony with the divine life of Jesus Christ. "O! would that I might persuade you to turn away from earthly things and follow after things eternal! Would God grant this grace to me and to you, I should assuredly deem myself happy in this life. But this is a gift from God. 'None may come unto Me,' saith the Lord, 'unless he be brought by the Father.' I can not enlighten you inwardly, I can only strike upon your ears; but what may that avail if your intellect be not enlightened nor your affections kindled?" There was something in his voice which gave such effect to his words that often when he spoke, as in the passage just quoted, the whole audience was melted to tears.

It is in the sermon on the Gospel of the Epiphany in which his deep feeling and lofty imagination are seen, perhaps, as clearly as in any other of his discourses. He shows here great skill both in description and argument, and proves himself a master in exhortation. The three following paragraphs are from this Epiphany day sermon. They are well worthy the space here given to them:

"'Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king; behold there came to Jerusalem wise men from the East, saying, Where is He that is born in Judea? For we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him with gifts'—mark the words and observe the mysteries. Behold then that He, by whom all things were made, is this day born upon earth. Wherefore, the beginning of all things (inasmuch as by Him all things were created) is now born, and hath a young virgin for His mother. Behold, He who holds the world in His hand, is brought forth of a maid. Behold, He that is above all things begins by having a native land; He begins as the compatriot of men, the companion of men, the brother of men, and the son of man! See how God cometh near unto you!"

"Hearken then, my brethren, and let not your thoughts go astray. Open your eyes, and behold who are these that are coming. I cry unto you, O men, and my voice is for the children of men. Behold the wise men, behold the Chaldeans; behold those that were not born among Christians; behold those that were not baptized; behold those that were not instructed in the law of the Gospel; behold

those that did not receive the numerous sacraments of the Church; behold those that heard not the voice of preachers. *Behold the wise men of the East,* from the midst of a perverse and evil nation, from distant and remote regions; shrinking from no expense, from no weariness, from no danger. *They came.* And when was it that they came? When all the world was full of idolatry; when men bowed down before stocks and stones; when the earth was full of darkness and gloom, and all men full of iniquity. When was it that they came? When Christ was a babe, when He lay upon straw, when He showed naught but weakness, when He had as yet done no miracles. *We beheld his star in the East,* the star that announced his coming. Behold, they saw His star, but no other miracle; they beheld not the blind restored to sight nor the dead raised nor any other visible thing. *And we come to worship Him.* We have made a great journey only to worship the foot-prints of the Babe. If only we may see Him, may adore Him, may touch Him, if only we may lay our gifts before Him, we deem ourselves blessed. We have forsaken our country, have forsaken our families, have forsaken our friends, have forsaken our kingdom, have forsaken our great riches; we have come from a distant land, through many dangers, and with much speed, and solely to worship Him. This is sufficient for us, this is more to us than our kingdoms, this is more precious to us than our very life. What then shall we say to these things, my brethren? What, by our faith, shall we say? O living faith! O highest

charity! See ye then how great was the perfidy of the Judeans, how great the hardness of their hearts, since neither by miracles, nor by prophecies, nor by this voice, were they moved!"

"But why have we directed our sermon against the men of Judea, and not rather against ourselves? Why dost thou see the mote in thy brother's eye, yet can not see the beam in thy own? Behold, the Lord Jesus is no longer a babe in the manger, but is great in heaven. Already hath He preached and performed miracles, hath been crucified, hath risen again, and now sitteth at the right hand of the Father, hath sent his Holy Spirit down upon the earth, hath sent the apostles, hath subjugated the nations. Already the kingdom of heaven is everywhere; behold, its door is opened unto you; the Lord hath led the way, and the apostles and martyrs have followed Him. But thou art slothful, and all labor is a burden to thee, and thou wilt not follow the footsteps of Christ. Behold, each day avarice grows, the whirlpool of usury is widened, lust hath contaminated all things, and pride soareth to the clouds. Ye are children of the devil, and ye seek to do the will of your father. O! well might it be said of you, in the words of the Bible—'Behold, I go unto a people which knoweth me not, and calleth not upon my name; daily have I reached out my hands to an unbelieving people, which walketh in the way of perdition, a people which provoketh me to anger.'" The effect of such a sermon could not have been other than wholesome and helpful. It was in sermons of this character that he found his greatest delight. He was a true Gospel preacher.

The struggle between Savonarola and Lorenzo was nearing its end. In his charming villa at Careggi Lorenzo the Magnificent lay dying. Physicians of greatest repute had done their best. Pico and Ficino had paid frequent visits to their great friend. Poliziano had nursed the sick man like a brother. When priests gathered about him to administer the last sacrament, Lorenzo was visibly overcome with agitation. Frightful specters of his sins rose up to horrify him. There was the sack of Volterra! There were beautiful girls driven to shame through robbery! There was frightful and indiscriminate slaughter in the reprisals which followed the conspiracy of the Pazzi! Friends tried to console him. Priests and monks attempted words of comfort. But he would have none of them. Mariano would not do now! He would have none of the fawning priests and friars who had so basely bowed to his every wish. To the amazement of all he commanded them to send for Savonarola, and said, "I know no honest friar save this one." Savonarola could hardly believe the message. Made certain there was no mistake, he started. We can hardly imagine the fast hurrying thoughts which must have crowded through his brain as, with black cowl drawn about his face, he walked out through the San Gallo gate towards Careggi. He was ushered into the chamber of the illustrious Prince. The two mighty men of Florence were at last come together! One was dying—the other was approaching his greatest power and influence.

As the two men looked at each other Lorenzo

was again overcome with agitation. Savonarola spoke of the goodness and mercy of God! The dying man listened. The testimony of biographers, early and late, Catholic and Protestant, seems to be divided as to just what took place between these two men. The description here given follows Burlamacchi and other early biographers, rather than Poliziano, Roscoe, and others, who had good reason, all of them, for trying to soften the account as given by intimate friends of the great preacher. "Before absolution," said Savonarola, "three things are necessary." "What things, Father?" asked the dying Lorenzo. With solemn face and extended hand Savonarola began. "First a great and living faith in God's mercy." The answer came quickly, "I have the fullest faith in it, Father." "Second, you must restore all your ill-gotten wealth or charge your sons to restore it in your name." There was no quick answer to this demand, but after some hesitation assent was given. And now Savonarola, rising to his full height, announced the last requirement. "You must restore liberty to the people of Florence." The angry Lorenzo, summoning all his dying strength, turned his back. The absolution was not granted. Forces and ideas so opposite as those represented by these two men, could not be brought into harmony, even in the chamber of death. It was Lorenzo who departed! This was as Savonarola had said to the committee of noble citizens two years before, "He will depart, but I shall stay."

CHAPTER IX.

STARTLING EVENTS AND STRIKING VISIONS.

Piero de' Medici, son of Lorenzo, succeeded to the position of power and influence in the government of Florence. If we may accept his father's estimate of him, Piero was the fool of the family. To each of Lorenzo's sons he gave a name suggestive of his character. Giovanni, the young cardinal, he called the "wise one;" Giuliano, the "good;" to Piero, his successor in political responsibility, he gave the name "mad one." Lorenzo did not miss it much in the estimate he made of his three sons.

Piero was almost totally unlike his father. He did have some of his bad qualities, but none of the good. The prudence and far-sightedness which Lorenzo had shown in his successful foreign policy, did not appeal to Piero at all. Nor did he have any patience with the form and semblance of freedom in the government of Florence which Lorenzo had diplomatically preserved. He was not born for an administrator, and the details of politics were not to his liking. As a man to guide the Florentine ship of State he was an utter failure. He did have ambition. He was a good athlete, and showed great skill in such sports as handball, football, wrestling, boxing, and tennis. He excelled

as a horseman, and was exceedingly fond of racing and tournaments. So proud was he of his athletic skill that he challenged the best players of all Italy to come to Florence and meet him. In the arts and sciences he took little interest, though he was a man of no mean intellectual ability. He wrote much poetry, such as it was, and spoke with pleasing fluency.

Piero inherited the proud spirit of the Orsini family from his mother. The courteous refinement of manner which had characterized his father, and contributed so largely to his popularity, found no expression in him. Socially engaging, when he wanted to be, and strikingly attractive in personal appearance—"the only handsome member of the Medici family"—he was, at times, blunt, rough, and uncouth in manner. He often broke into violent fits of anger when there was hardly slight excuse. It is said that on one occasion at a dancing party he boxed the ears of one of his cousins. He not only offended private individuals but created public resentment in many quarters by openly disregarding the forms of liberty so dear to the freedom-loving Florentines. Instead of flattering the people by keeping up the appearance of being only a citizen, and, therefore, one of the people, thus following the example of his father and grandfather, he rashly decided to play the rôle of absolute prince. This policy created disaffection. Many who had willingly acknowledged the leadership of Lorenzo, stoutly refused to brook the insolent arrogance of Piero. Murmurs were heard among the citizens, and, almost before men realized it, a hostile party

had risen up in antagonism to the rule of the Medici.

It was now that Savonarola, all unconscious to himself, came to be regarded as the leader of the opposition. There was nothing in his preaching which showed any direct antagonism to Piero. In fact, it has been thought by some that Savonarola did not regard Piero as a formidable opponent of his work. Piero, on the other hand, could not look upon the growing power and influence of the Prior of San Marco without feeling that the preacher constituted a menace to his own power and influence. With more earnestness than ever Savonarola kept on preaching justice and liberty.

Within two weeks after the death of Lorenzo, while preaching the Lenten sermons in the Church of San Lorenzo, Savonarola saw a vision which he described in the following words: "I saw two crosses, whereof the one, which rose from the midst of the city of Rome, and reached even to the sky, was black, and it bore the inscription CRUX IRÆ DEI. (The Cross of God's Wrath.) Immediately upon its appearance, I saw the sky dark with scudding clouds, and a tempest of wind; lightning, thunderbolts, hail, fire, and hurtling swords arose, and an immense multitude of men were slain so that only a remnant was left. Thereafter, I saw the sky grow calm and clear, and another cross rose up, from the midst of Jerusalem, not less lofty than the first, but of a splendor so brilliant that it illuminated all the world; causing fresh flowers to spring on every side and joy to abound, and it bore the legend CRUX MISERICORDIÆ DEI. (The Cross

of God's Mercy.) And forthwith all nations of the earth flocked together to adore and embrace it."

Such a vision could only create in the minds of the people expectation of an impending crisis. The "black cross," signifying the wrath of God, rose from Rome. The "white cross," emblematic of Divine mercy, rose from Jerusalem. This was the third in the series of visions in which Savonarola saw frightful evils impending because of the corruptions and atrocities of Rome. On seeing the first of these visions he had cried out, "O God, lady, that I might break those spreading wings!" On seeing the black cross, the darkened sky, the lightning and thunder, the wind and the hail, and the multitudes of slain, the cry must have broke forth again, and with increasing earnestness. He proclaimed once more the scourge which would come upon the Church, and the regeneration which would follow.

Not long after this vision came the announcement of the death of Innocent VIII. His successor was Roderigo Borgia, who has already been described as "the man to whom belonged the bad pre-eminence of being the worst pope that ever sat in St. Peter's chair." The number of cardinals who were in the conclave when he was elected, was twenty-three. His election was bought. This nobody doubted. But Rome was becoming so accustomed to simony that the purchase created little surprise. Many discussed the details of the bargain without the slightest feeling that they were doing an impropriety, any more than if they

had been talking of a trade between the King of Naples and the Duke of Milan. It is a pity that so little good can be said of Roderigo Borgia, who assumed the title Alexander VI. Licentious and immoral, notorious for his insatiable greed for gold, scandalously ambitious for honors and preferment, this Alexander sat himself down in the chair of St. Peter, to rule the Church and Italy in the interest of his own personal ambition and for the advantage of his notorious household.

It was stated in the opening chapter that there is no quarrel between Catholic and Protestant as to the character of this pope. In a recent biography of Savonarola, by Herbert Lucas, a Jesuit, the author, after referring to the scandalous excesses of the unworthy men, who for family or political reasons, had been advanced by Sixtus and Innocent to the highest positions in the Church and in the papal States, says, "It was in fact precisely these unworthy promotions under Sixtus IV, which rendered possible the choice of his successor Innocent VIII, and which paved the way for that crowning scandal, the simoniacal election of the ever infamous Alexander VI." In the whole list of Protestant biographers it would be difficult to find stronger words of criticism than these and others of Fra Lucas. The election of Alexander was received throughout Italy with almost universal dismay. Ferdinand of Naples, it is said, burst into tears at the news, although never before known to weep, even on the death of his own children. Fra Lucas is right in describing it as the "crowning scandal" of the age.

The announcement of Roderigo Borgia's election to the papal throne, naturally tended to turn many eyes toward the man in the Duomo, who had been speaking out so vehemently against the corruptions of Rome. Perhaps some called attention to his declaration, made less than a year before, that the death of three men was at hand,—Lorenzo, Innocent VIII, and the King of Naples. Two were already dead, and the third too feeble to last much longer. The three famous propositions were being talked about everywhere. "The Church will be scourged! It will be regenerated! All this will come to pass speedily!" Was not the time of the fulfillment of the prophecies at hand? The fame of Savonarola rapidly increased.

The effect of this papal election upon Savonarola must have been almost overwhelming. He undoubtedly thought again of the visions he had seen, and the earnest messages he had spoken. He re-read the prophets; the noble and impassioned addresses of Isaiah, and the frightful woes and lamentations of Jeremiah. There now appeared another vision. It came to him in his cell in San Marco. This vision can best be told in his own words. "I saw then in the year 1492, the night before the last sermon which I gave that Advent in Santa Reparata (the Duomo), a hand in heaven with a sword, upon which was written: *'The sword of the Lord upon the earth, soon and swiftly;'* and over the hand was written, 'True and just are the judgments of the Lord.' And it seemed that the arm of the hand proceeded from three faces in one light, of which the first said: 'The

iniquity of my sanctuary crieth to me from the earth.' The second replied: 'Therefore will I visit with a rod their iniquities, and with stripes their sins.' The third said: 'My mercy will I not remove from it, nor will I harm it in my truth, and I will have mercy upon the poor and the needy.' In like manner the first answered: 'My people have forgotten my commandments days without number.' The second replied: 'Therefore will I grind and break in pieces and will not have mercy.' The third said: 'I will be mindful of those who walk in my precepts.' And straightway there came a great voice from all the three faces, over all the world, and it said: '*Hearken, all ye dwellers on the earth; thus saith the Lord. I, the Lord, am speaking in My holy zeal. Behold, the days shall come and I will unsheath My sword upon you. Be ye converted therefore unto Me, before My fury be accomplished; for when the destruction cometh, ye shall seek peace and there shall be none.*' After these words it seemed to me that I saw the whole world, and that the angels descended from heaven to earth, arrayed in white, with a multitude of spotless stoles on their shoulders and red crosses in their hands; and they went through the world, offering to each man a white robe and a cross. Some men accepted them and robed themselves with them. Some would not accept them, although they did not impede the others who accepted them. Others would neither accept them nor permit that the others should accept them; and these were the tepid and the sapient of this world, who made mock of them and strove to persuade the contrary.

After this, the hand turned the sword down towards the earth; and suddenly it seemed that all the air grew dark with clouds, and that it rained down swords and hail with great thunder and lightning and fire; and there came upon the earth pestilence and famine and great tribulation. And I saw the angels go through the midst of the people, and give to those who had the white robe and the cross in their hands a clear wine to drink; and they drank and said: 'How sweet in our mouths are Thy words, O Lord.' And the dregs at the bottom of the chalice they gave to drink to the others, and they would not drink; and it seemed that these would fain have been converted to penitence and could not, and they said: 'Wherefore dost thou forget us, Lord?' And they wished to lift up their eyes and look up to God, but they could not, so weighed down were they with tribulations; for they were as though drunk, and it seemed that their hearts had left their breasts, and they went seeking the lusts of this world and found them not. And they walked like senseless beings without hearts. After this was done, I heard a very great voice from those three faces, which said: 'Hear ye then the word of the Lord; for this have I waited for you, that I may have mercy upon you. Come ye therefore to me, for I am kind and merciful, extending mercy to all who call upon me. But if you will not, I will turn my eyes from you forever.' And it turned then to the just, and said: 'But rejoice, ye just, and exult, for when my short anger shall have passed, I will break the horns of sinners, and the horns of the just shall be exalted.' And suddenly

everything disappeared, and it was said to me: 'Son, if sinners had eyes, they would surely see how grievous and hard is this pestilence, and how sharp the sword.' "

The description of this vision has been given at length because it is perhaps the most strikingly characteristic of all Savonarola's visions. Besides, it enters into and determines, to a very great extent, his future preaching. "The Gladius Domini" (Sword of Jehovah) which he saw, promising mercy to the good, and threatening chastisement to the wicked, was to Savonarola the wrath and the judgment of God coming to "break the spreading wings." His description of the vision to the great and excited audience in the Duomo must have been simply overwhelming. The people never forgot it. It was an event which marked a day to be reckoned from. The white robes and red crosses of the vision, were thereafter the distinguishing marks of Savonarola's followers in public processions and similar functions. Many medals were struck in the preacher's honor, celebrating the announcement of the vision. Two of them are still preserved in the Ufizzi gallery in Florence. Villari has described one of them as attributed by Heiss, and certain other writers, to one of the Della Robbia family. This medal bears on the obverse the friar's head, cowled, but with the rather high forehead left uncovered. The legend encircling it is "Hieronymus Savonarola Ferrariensis vir doctissimus ordinis prædicatorum." (Girolamo Savonarola, of Ferrara, the most learned of the class of prophets.) On the upper part of the reverse is a hand with a dagger;

beneath a city (Florence or Rome), and around it the words, *"Gladius Domini super terram cito et velociter."* (The sword of the Lord upon the earth, soon and swiftly.)

It is worthy of remark that in this very year, 1492, while Columbus, a man of Genoa, was discovering a new world beyond the seas, Savonarola, a man of a sister Italian city, was discovering a new world of spiritual living and moral responsibility.

With all Savonarola's preaching, and with all his care in directing affairs in the monastery in this eventful year, he twice journeyed to Venice, once in February and again in May. He also visited Pisa, where he preached for a short time in the monastery of Santa Caterina. In the Lenten season of 1493, to the surprise and disappointment of many, he was not heard in the Duomo, having been appointed to preach the Lenten sermons for that year in Bologna. Why he was sent there is not known. Villari puts the responsibility on Piero de' Medici, who, less judicious than his father, wished to be rid of the too popular preacher, round whom all his enemies were beginning to rally. He accordingly arranged with the General of the Order, to have the prior removed from Florence.

This explanation of the absence is not accepted by all. There is good reason, however, for believing that it was not the wish of Savonarola to be absent from Florence at this time. The brothers of San Marco were sore distressed at his being away from them and wrote him of their grief and impatience at his delay in returning. "Your tender affection," he writes in reply, "is ever in my mind,

and I often speak of it with Fra Basilio, my very dear son and your true brother in Christ Jesus. . . . We lead a very solitary life, like unto two turtle doves, awaiting the spring to return again to the soft climate where we once dwelt, amid the blossoms and joys of the Holy Spirit. . . . But if your sadnees seems too great for you to deem life possible without me, your love is still imperfect, and therefore God has taken me from you for some space of time."

He did not enjoy his stay in Bologna. The city was not at all pleasing to him. Besides, his heart was in Florence. In Bologna the despotic Bentivoglio, ruffian as well as despot, ruled with an iron hand. Preachers were expected to keep well within prescribed limits in Bologna. Under such constraint Savonarola must have hesitated even more than he did when preaching before the Signory in Florence. After the first hearing, he was described by the literati as "a simple man and a preacher for women." But great numbers came to hear him. Even before he arrived his name was well known in Bologna, as in all Italy.

The only incident worthy of note during this series of sermons was a stinging rebuke which was given to my Lady Bentivoglio, who came day after day with the crowd to hear the popular preacher. She always arrived late. Not the last important lady who has had "the vice of coming in late to Church." She came with a long train of ladies, cavaliers, and pages. It was an interruption of the service which Savonarola could not tolerate. For the first day or two he paused in his sermon until she was seated, thinking she would take this as a

gentle rebuke and arrive earlier. This she did not do. Savonarola then remarked on the sin of disturbing the devotions of the faithful. Offended at these words, which she clearly understood were meant for her, she came still later thereafter, made more noise in coming in, and was in every way haughtier in her manner. At last Savonarola could bear it no longer. Interrupted one morning when he was in the very midst of a most earnest exhortation, he cried out in a voice that startled every one in the room, "Behold, here cometh the devil to interrupt God's Word." The haughty wife of Bentivoglio, insulted and angered, ordered two of her cavaliers to strike the preacher dead then and there in the pulpit. This they had not the courage to do. Chagrined and humiliated, she then sent two others to find the monk in his cell and kill him. Savonarola received them, so the story goes, with so much calm and dignity, and spoke to them with such an air of authority, that they listened respectfully and departed in confusion.

It was near the end of the Lenten season and Savonarola was soon to leave Bologna, but he would not let it be said that he had been driven away or that he had gone out secretly. Before leaving the pulpit on the day of his last sermon, after declaring his confidence in his God-appointed mission, he said, "This evening I set forth on my journey to Florence, with my little staff and wooden flask, and I shall rest at Pianora. If any man have aught to say to me, let him come before I leave. But I tell you that my death is not to take place in Bologna."

CHAPTER X.

REFORMS BEGIN IN THE MONASTERY OF SAN MARCO.

On returning to Florence Savonarola found the opposition to Piero more determined than ever. He was in a strait betwixt two. If he spoke as he felt he ought to speak, he might be sent away from Florence again. If he kept silent—but he could not do that. He finally decided upon a course of action which in all probability he had thought through before. His one aim now was to carry out a program of reform. But he saw that it was necessary to begin with the men who occupied positions of leadership. In this case it was the monks and the priests. The first among them to be reached were the friars of San Marco. Savonarola felt the necessity of setting his own household in order. To do this he must secure for himself and for the convent a more independent position.

San Marco and the other Dominican monasteries connected with it in Tuscany had been, since 1448, under the jurisdiction of the congregation of Lombardy, and Savonarola as Prior of San Marco was subject to the commands of the vicar of that congregation. In order to secure the freedom needed in his work of reform, Savonarola made application to Rome, asking that the independence of the Tuscany congregation be again recognized. He was

heartily supported in this by all the members of San Marco, by the Signory of Florence, by Piero de' Medici, and by one of the most influential patrons of the order, Cardinal Caraffa of Naples. Savonarola never showed more clearly than in this instance his practical wisdom, sagacity, and far-sighted diplomacy. He was not content with simply forwarding the petition, powerfully supported though it was. He sent two of the most trusted brothers of San Marco, Fra Alessandro and Fra Dominico, instructing them to urge the application in every way possible with wisdom. These messengers found on arriving in Rome that the Lombardy congregation was urgently opposing the plan of separation, and that they had back of them Ludovico Sforza of Milan, the Duke of Ferrara, Bentivoglio of Bologna, the Venetian Signory, the King of Naples, and Rome. There seemed no chance for the success of the plan of separation, and Savonarola's messengers so wrote him. By speedy post he replied, "Fear not, remain firm, and you will conquer; the Lord scattereth the counsels of nations and overthroweth the designs of princes."

Victory came in a most unexpected manner. It was through Cardinal Caraffa, who shrewdly outwitted the powerful opposition and secured for San Marco the coveted brief. The subject was discussed at a consistory on the 22d of May, 1493. The pope wearied of the discussion, which had already been persistent and long continued, suddenly dissolved the consistory, saying that he was not disposed to sign any briefs that day. Cardinal Caraffa did not leave with the others, but remained with the pope,

ngaging him in entertaining conversation on other subjects. At the opportune moment he produced the brief already prepared and playfully asked the Holy Father to sign it. Laughingly the pope refused, and laughingly Cardinal Caraffa drew the pope's signet ring from his finger and sealed the brief. Caraffa had hardly gone from the pope's presence, when a delegation came in haste from the Lombardy congregation with newly-framed arguments against the independence of San Marco. But they were too late. The brief was sealed. The pope tired of the whole affair refused to hear any of their arguments. "Had you come sooner," he said, "your request would have been granted, but now what is done is done."

By a shrewd move on the part of the Father Provincial of the Lombardy congregation, Savonarola and certain others to quit San Marco and order was sent to San Marco commanding Savonarola and certain others to quit San Marco and immediately return to their own convent in Bologna. It was intended that this order should reach San Marco before the papal brief. By what has been termed "a happy circumstance," though Savonarola fully believed that it was by the intervention of Divine Providence, the order had been addressed to the superior of the convent at Fiesole, with the request that he communicate with the brothers concerned in San Marco. The superior to whom the letter was addressed was away from the convent, and the important and urgent message did not reach San Marco until more than a week after it was due.

It was then to no purpose. The brief had arrived and San Marco was now the head of the congregation of Tuscany, subject only to Rome and the general of the order. Savonarola was re-elected prior, and on the 15th of May, by the action of the General of the Order of Dominicans, he was made provincial. This not only gave him independence in San Marco, but gave him power in all the monasteries related to San Marco in the province of Tuscany. Everything the prior desired had now been accomplished and he was ready to begin the reforms which he felt to be necessary.

Savonarola had thought, at one time, of taking his brother monks to some mountain place where in solitude he might with them live a pure and holy life, utterly apart from the world. But his maturer view was very different. It had nothing whatever of the ascetic about it. "It was not a question of forsaking the world, but of living in its midst in order to purify it; it was his business to train men, not to be good hermits, but worthy monks, living an exemplary life, and ready to shed their blood for the salvation of souls. To purify manners, rekindle faith, and reform the Church, were the subjects Savonarola sought to promote." The first reform established in the monastery was the restoring of the old order of St. Dominic which forbade the holding of property. St. Dominic's last words to his disciples had been, *"Have charity, preserve humility, observe voluntary poverty. May my malediction and that of God fall upon him that shall bring possessions to this order."* These words, in good clear letters, were still written on the cloister

walls of San Marco, but since the days of Antonino they had been disregarded. A change in the constitution had made it possible for the monastery to hold property, and San Marco became wealthy.

In restoring the old order by which the vow of poverty was made binding, all the property which had come into the possession of the monastery in violation of St. Dominic's command was now sold. Then came the problem of providing an income sufficient to maintain the society. Savonarola began by reducing the cost of living. Ornaments, fine cloth, and expensive furniture were all forbidden; illuminated books, gold and silver crucifixes, and the like, were prohibited. The reforming prior did not ask others to do what he did not do himself. In his cell even now may be seen evidences of his simple mode of living—the rosary, the wooden crucifix, the cloak, the undergarment, and the hair shirt. All these tell more loudly than words how Savonarola was an example to those under his spiritual care.

The reorganization had its positive side as well. The practice of manual labor was introduced, the study of painting and sculpture, and the art of writing and illuminating manuscripts were encouraged. "The result," according to Father Marchese, "was that this convent, and the others which became associated with it, produced a number of distinguished painters, sculptors, architects, modelers, brass-founders and wood-carvers."

With much enthusiasm Savonarola gave his attention to the raising of the standard of education

in the monastery, being particularly careful to emphasize the education which would fit the brothers for the ministry of preaching. "Three branches of study," this also from Father Marchese, "were carried on at San Marco under the guidance of Fra Girolamo—scholastic theology, moral theology, and Holy Scripture. To the first only a very few were admitted. Those who were less gifted he advised to apply themselves to the study of moral theology. But most earnestly he inculcated on all the study of the Holy Scripture, and that this might be pursued with profit he made provision for the teaching of Hebrew, Syriac and Chaldee." It will be seen from this that Savonarola expected his brother monks not simply to read the Bible but to give it serious study, and not in the scholastic language only, the Latin, but in such Oriental languages as would throw light on its meaning. One reason for teaching the Syriac and the Chaldee was that he might later fulfill his holy purpose of preaching the Gospel to the Turk.

There seems to have been no friction whatever in carrying out these reforms. The manifest sincerity and earnestness of the prior, and the contagion of his enthusiasm, seemed to pervade the entire convent. Every friar caught something of his spirit and the monastery prospered. Within a few years the number of friars increased from fifty to nearly three hundred, so that the original building was too small to contain them. Men of the noblest families of Florence came to the gates of the monastery and prayed to be admitted. Not less than six representatives of the house of Strozzi

occupied cells in San Marco. Five of the Bettini were there. The names of Medici, Tornabuoni, Vespucci, and Salviati, are found in the list of members. It is hardly too much to say that during the palmy days of Savonarola the monastery of San Marco was the pride of Florence.

Some in the city and many outside could not comprehend the new order of things. A letter written about this time to an abbess of Ferrara, throws light on the doubt and questionings which were arising in the minds of many. This abbess had evidently written to Savonarola expressing doubt as to the wisdom of the innovations. In reply he said, "It is quite a mistake to say that we have entered upon a new mode of life. A return to the principles and example of our saintly predecessors is not the adoption of a new mode of life. . . . But for mendicants to build themselves palaces with marble columns; to live in a cell handsome enough for a prince; to hold possessions contrary to the profession of one's Order; to wear rich cloth in place of rough serge; to pray little; to wander hither and thither; to wish to be poor and at the same time to want for nothing—these things are indeed innovations and are a stumbling-block to souls. Our first fathers lived in one fashion, our modern fathers live in another. Let every one make his choice between the old style and the new. Our way of life, instead of giving scandal here in Florence, on the contrary, gives great edification; and yet you must know that we have hardly begun to carry out what we intend." "It is time," he goes on to say, "it is time, it is indeed time, to adopt a

singular mode of life, before the world has grown luke warm, so that God may well say in the words of the Apocalyse 'I will spew thee out of My mouth.'"

If the Reformer sometimes seemed stern and severe in the pulpit, and as he walked the streets of Florence, his relations with the monks and with visitors who came frequently to the convent, were always most cordial and friendly. "The natural gravity of his disposition was softened by a gentle graciousness, which seldom failed to beget a warm affection in those closely associated with him. He could unbend from his usual austerity of mien, and enter with genial freedom into the pleasantries and pastimes of the brothers in their hours of recreation. Occasionally he would take them out for a day's excursion into the country, choosing some secluded spot where they could enjoy the beauties of nature undisturbed; and there he would freely join with them in their simple repast under a shady tree, read to them, sing with them, and look on with frank and easy good humor at the sports in which the novices sought vent for their youthful spirits and energies; endearing himself to them all by his winning brotherliness and humanity."

The months following the Lent of 1492 were full of thrilling events. The death of Lorenzo and the accession of Piero the "mad," the death of Innocent VIII and the unholy coronation of Alexander VI, the portentous visions of the white and black crosses and the Gladius Domini, the trying experience of Bologna, the hotly contested battle for the independence of San Marco, the transforma-

tions begun in the monastery through the restoration of the old order, and the increasing devotion and enthusiasm of the people, who now openly declared that the Prior of San Marco was a true prophet of God,—all these events quickly crowded together, and the responsibility of the mission under which he staggered, must have been almost overwhelming as Savonarola began the Advent sermons of 1493.

In these sermons we probably see Savonarola's preaching at its best, so far at least as the best in his preaching can be reproduced in cold type. The gleam and flash of the orator's eye and the weird fascination and power of his clear, penetrating, and thrilling voice, can not be put down on the page of a book. They can only be felt. The subject of these sermons was the seventy-third Psalm. Texts for twenty-five sermons Savonarola found in this one Psalm, and they were all suggestive of the message he felt called of God to bring to the people. "The infamous manners of princes and priests of Italy," "The corruption of the Church," "The approach of the threatened scourge," "The anxiety of the righteous to put an end to the general depravity,"—all these themes were in this Psalm. In these sermons Savonarola gave almost a complete exposition of his doctrines. He set forth in clear and explicit terms the nature and character of the reforms which he hoped to see brought about in Florence and in all Italy, and then throughout Europe. His was a comprehensive purpose. He dreamed of a regeneration which would revive the whole Church and bring Constantinople again within the Christian

fold. Even in this age, so dark morally and spiritually, Savonarola had the spirit of the true missionary of the first century and the twentieth. He believed that the doctrine he preached was for all men, but he would begin in Florence.

In order to understand the later career of Savonarola it is important that the sermons of this Advent series shall be studied with care. The key-note was sounded in one of the earliest of them when the preacher addressed himself to the clergy. "They tickle men's ears when they talk of Aristotle and Plato, Virgil and Petrarch, and take no concern for the salvation of souls. Why, instead of expounding so many books, do they not expound the one Book in which is the law and spirit of life! The Gospels, O Christians, you should ever have with you; not merely the letter, but the spirit of the Gospels, for if thou hast not the spirit of grace, what will it avail to carry about the whole Book? And, again, still greater is the foolishness of those that load themselves with briefs and tracts and writings, so that they are like unto stalls at a fair. Charity does not consist in written papers, the true books of Christ are the apostles and the saints; the true reading of them, is to imitate their lives."

No preacher was ever more emphatically a man of one book. Perhaps the finest thing ever said about him as a student of the Bible is this: "By force of study and meditation he had ceased to regard the Bible as a book. It was a world, a living, speaking, infinite world, in which the past, present and future were all revealed to him." This is beautifully illustrated in the following paragraph from one of his sermons, in which he seems to talk

with the saints whom he is addressing as though they were actually there in the Duomo. "Tell me, O Peter, tell me, O Magdalen, wherefore are you in Paradise? You sinned even as we sin. Thou, Peter, who hadst testified unto the Son of God, hadst conversed with Him, heard Him preach, beheld His miracles, and, alone, with two other disciples, hadst beheld His transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, harkened unto His paternal voice; and who, despite all this, at the word of a base woman didst deny Him thrice, yet thou art restored to grace, and made the head of the Church, and dost now enjoy heavenly bliss; how hast thou gained these guerdons? Confess that not by thine own merits hast thou attained salvation, but by the goodness of God, who didst bestow so many blessings on thee, and vouchsafed to thee in this life so much light and grace. And thou, Magdalen, once called the sinner, thou didst hearken many times to the preaching of thy master, Jesus Christ, and nevertheless wert deaf to His words, . . . but when it pleased the Lord, and He touched thy heart, thou didst hasten as in a frenzy, with thy vase of alabaster, to the house of the Pharisee, and, casting thyself at the sweet Master's feet, didst bathe them with thy tears, and wast deemed worthy to hear the sweet words—'Thy sins which are many are forgiven.' Later, thou wast so favored by the Saviour as to be the first to behold Him risen from the dead, and wert made an apostle unto the apostles. This grace, these gifts, were not vouchsafed to thee for thy deserts, O Mary! but because God loved thee and willed thy salvation."

It is in such paragraphs as the above that certain German and English writers have found evidence to support the theory that Savonarola was a precurser of the reformation in preaching the doctrine of justification by faith. Their position is utterly without foundation, as every careful student will agree, who has examined Savonarola's sermons. In doctrine Savonarola was a good Catholic. The source of his teaching, however, was not the Church fathers but the Bible. This gave him a freedom in preaching which slaves to the doctrines of the Church did not have and could not have. There was a freshness about his words. Some of his distinctions are fine. "We must not," says he, "condemn the sinner, but only his sins, and must have compassion on him; for so long as free will and the grace of God endure, he may always turn to the Lord and be converted." He was ever a match for the philosophers in his audience. "If any one asks," said he, "why the will is free, we reply unto them, Because it is *will*." Human responsibility was ever made prominent in his preaching. He taught that man must needs co-operate in the act of justification, and do all that in him lies, for God will not fail him. If a brother would fain receive the love of Jesus Christ he must first hearken unto the Divine voice of the Lord, which was daily calling unto him. God could not do it all. Man must do somewhat for himself."

No preacher has ever surpassed Savonarola in the effective preaching of the beauty and power of Divine love. Two illustrations, here given, will suggest his method. "Take, for instance," this he

said in one of his sermons, "the physician that bringeth love and charity to the sick, for, if he be good and kind, and learned and skillful, none can be better than he. Thou wilt see that love teacheth him everything, and will be the measure and rule of all the measures and rules of medicine. He will endure a thousand fatigues as though they were of no account, will inquire into everything, and will order his remedies and see them prepared, and will never leave the sick man. If instead, gain be his object, he will have no care for the sufferer, and his very skill will fail him." This description of the spirit of the true physician is certainly a noble utterance. To many it will suggest the character of Dr. MacLure. Savonarola's early studies he never forgot, and to the day of his death he had a high and exalted conception of the noble profession of medicine. What an ideal he holds up for the physician in the words, "Love will be the measure and rule of all the measures and rules of medicine!"

"Behold what love can effect." This is quoted from the same sermon as the foregoing. "Take the example of the mother with the child. Who hath taught this young woman, who hath had no children before, to nurse her babe? Love. See what fatigue she endureth by day and by night to rear it, and how the heaviest fatigue seemeth light to her. What is the cause of this? It is love. See what ways she hath, what loving caresses and sweet words for this little babe of hers! What hath taught her these things? Love. Take the example of Christ, who, moved by the deepest charity, came

to us as a little child, in all things like unto the sons of men, and submitted to hunger and thirst, to heat and cold and discomfort. What hath urged Him to do this? Love. He spoke now with just men, now with publicans and sinners, and He led a life that all men and all women, small and great, rich and poor, may imitate; all after their own way and according to their condition, and thus undoubtedly win their salvation. And what made Him lead so poor and marvelous a life? Undoubtedly, love. Love bound Him to the pillar, love led Him to the cross, love raised Him from the dead and made Him ascend into heaven, and thus accomplish all the mysteries of our redemption."

Savonarola had a genius for taking the familiar and the common-place to illustrate the highest Christian truths and virtues. In sweetness and gentleness of spirit he made heaven come near to men and unfolded the mysteries of Divine love; he also rebuked sin and cried out with mighty voice against unrighteousness. In burning words he described the princes of Italy as "wicked princes sent to chastise the sins of their subjects;" princes whose "courts and palaces were the refuge of all the beasts and monsters of the earth;" princes whose evil doings were only matched by the flattering philosophers and poets" and the "priests who follow in the same course." These made up the "City of Impious and Foolish," whom God would destroy. They behold light and darkness, and they prefer darkness to light. Here follows one of the most striking of all his illustrations. "Behold now," speaking of the princes of Italy,

"behold now, they plunge into the sea and mount upon a whale, which they believe to be a rock, and they settle upon it. What generation of men is this? What purpose can be theirs? especially as I would have you to know that they intend to build a city on the whale's back. What would ye? I say. You will weigh down the beast and will drown. Nevertheless, they labor and dispute, build fortifications and come to blows, and one seeks to subjugate the other, and finally there arrives a tyrant to oppress them all. He persecutes his enemies to the death, has spies everywhere, hence there are fresh wars and fresh dissensions. At last the whale, wearied by all this tumult, makes a plunge, and thereupon all are drowned, and the city of Babylon is destroyed." "Thus," concludes Savonarola, "it is made manifest that the impious perish by the labors of the foolish, and that the foolish shall be chastised." The preacher did not have to explain to his audience the meaning of this illustration. The people knew that the "City of Fools" was none other than the unstable government of Piero de' Medici, which was already going so badly that it was hardly necessary for a prophet to predict its overthrow.

In this series of Advent sermons Savonarola discussed all the themes included in his three great propositions. Politics, morals, religion, and the Church, all came in for their share. Perhaps his strongest words were against the clergy, the "bad shepherds of the flock of Christ." "See," he cried out, "how in these days prelates and preachers are chained to the earth by love of earthly things; the

cure of souls is no longer their concern; they are content with the receipt of revenue; the preachers preach for the pleasure of princes, to be praised and magnified by them. Go thou to Rome and throughout Christendom in the mansions of the great prelates and great lords, there is no concern save for poetry and the oratorical art. Go thither and see, thou shalt find them all with books of humanities in their hands, and telling one another that they can guide men's souls by means of Virgil, Horace, and Cicero. Wouldst thou see how the Church is ruled by the hands of astrologers? And there is no prelate nor great lord that hath not intimate dealings with some astrologer, who fixeth the hour and the moment in which he is to ride out or undertake some piece of business. For these great lords venture not to stir a step save at their astrologer's bidding."

"Our Church," he went on to say, "hath many fine outer ceremonies for the solemnization of ecclesiastical rites, grand vestments and numerous draperies, with gold and silver candlesticks, and so many chalices that it is a majestic sight to behold. There thou seest the great prelates with splendid miters of gold and precious stones on their heads, and silver crosiers in hand; there they stand at the altar, decked with fine copes and stoles of brocade, chanting those beautiful vespers and masses very slowly, and with so many grand ceremonies, so many organs and choristers, that thou art struck with amazement; and all these priests seem to thee grave and saintly men; thou canst not believe that they may be in error, but deem that all which they

say and do should be obeyed as the Gospel; and thus is our Church conducted. Men feed upon these vanities and rejoice in these pomps, and say that the Church of Christ was never so flourishing, nor Divine worship so well conducted as at present. Likewise that the former prelates were inferior to these of our own times. The former, it is true, had fewer gold miters and fewer chalices, for, indeed, what few they possessed were broken up to relieve the needs of the poor; whereas our prelates for the sake of obtaining chalices, will rob the poor of their sole means of support. But dost thou know what I would tell thee?" Here follows a striking sentence which has been widely quoted: *"In the primitive church the chalices were of wood, the prelates of gold; in these days the Church hath chalices of gold and prelates of wood."* No word of comment is needed on such preaching as this. Savonarola simply told the people what many of them knew, that back of all the show and pomp there was insincerity and uncleanness, greed of gain and a pagan spirit.

In the twenty-third sermon of this series, after the preacher had again and again cried out against the frightful corruptions of the Church, he appealed to heaven and called out to the Almighty, "What doest thou, O Lord? Why dost thou slumber? Arise, and come to deliver Thy Church from the hands of the devils, from the hands of tyrants, the hands of iniquitous prelates. Hast Thou forsaken Thy Church? Dost Thou not love her? Is she not dear unto Thee? O Lord, we are becoming the despised of all nations; the Turks are masters of

Constantinople; we have lost Asia, have lost Greece, we already pay tribute to the Infidel. O Lord God, Thou hast dealt with us as a wrathful father, Thou hast cast us out from Thy presence! Hasten then the chastisement and the scourge, that it may be quickly granted us to return unto Thee."

At the close of these sermons Savonarola was widely recognized not only as a wonderful preacher and a prophet of God, but as a true and mighty champion of liberty; a man who would plead the cause of the people. In the following spring the Lenten sermons were a continuation of the series he had begun two years before on Noah's ark, which he described in its allegorical sense as portraying the gathering together of the righteous of the earth. Its length represented faith, its width charity, its height hope. Every day he gave some different interpretation of ten of the planks of which the ark was composed. On Easter morning, and when expectation was aroused to a high pitch, he declared the ark to be completed and closed his sermon with these words: "Let all hasten to enter into the Lord's ark. Noah invites you all to-day, the door stands open; but a time will come when the ark will be closed, and many will repent in vain of not having entered therein."

It occasioned no little surprise in Florence that the preacher devoted so much time to the theme of the ark and its building, and men were curious to know what he meant by the talk about the coming of a new Cyrus who would march through Italy in triumph. Surprise was increased when in the autumn the preacher again took up the theme on

which he had delayed so long during the previous Lent.

On the 21st of September he preached the third sermon in this third series on the ark. The day was destined to be a memorable one for Savonarola and for Florence. The crowd in the Duomo had been waiting since early morning. On entering the pulpit the preacher could not fail to notice the extraordinary agitation. He was himself agitated. In a voice, the like of which had never been heard in the Duomo, he announced his text, *"Behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth."* A strange alarm seemed to sweep over the audience. Pico della Mirandola declared afterwards that he felt a cold shiver run over him, and that his hair stood on end. The delay in getting to the end of the series of the sermons, which Savonarola had not been able to understand, was now made plain. The night before there had come to Florence the startling announcement that Charles VIII of France was crossing the Alps to conquer Italy.

CHAPTER XI.

CHARLES VIII OF FRANCE INVADES ITALY.

The flood had come with the French king. So Savonarola believed. This was the scourge he had been prophesying, the scourge which would come upon Italy and the Church; upon Italy, to punish the princes and the people for their sins; upon the Church, to punish and regenerate. Charles VIII was the messenger of God and the scourge of God. Savonarola had no doubt about this. Here at last was the power which would "break the spreading wings." It is not at all strange then that on the morning after the announcement of the coming of Charles he preached the sermon he did, to the excited audience packed in the Duomo, from the text, "Behold, I bring a flood of waters upon the earth." The effect of this sermon and of others which followed will be described later.

The political situation which led to the coming of Charles VIII was briefly this: There was a crown in Naples then worn by Alfonso, son of Ferdinand, which Charles had been persuaded belonged to him. This Charles, a son of Louis XI, was then only twenty-two years of age, and had just come to the French throne. His supposed claim to the crown of Alfonso came through the recent death of René of Anjou, giving the province of that name, with

all Angevin rights to the Neapolitan throne, to the French king. Interested parties persuaded Charles that his claim was good. Alexander VI, ever ready to lend his favor to any enterprise which promised advantage to himself or his family, and looking with greedy eye on the possible outcome of a French invasion, gave encouragement to Charles and promised him support. If the invasion offered opportunity for gaining personal ends he was ready for it. He knew he could change his attitude later if he wanted to: treaties and alliances were easily made and as easily unmade. Perhaps the march of Charles through Italy might add a few principalities to the domains of his ambitious sons and daughters. If so he was in favor of it.

The most urgent invitation which Charles received came from Ludovico Sforza, of Milan, more familiarly known as Ludovico, the Moor. Ludovico had strong reasons for wanting Charles to forcibly claim the Neapolitan crown, and that right speedily. His own power in Milan was in danger. It is hard to understand how a man so inordinately ambitious as Ludovico was should also be a prey to fear. That he was dominated by ambition nobody doubted, and his duplicity and bad faith were a matter of common remark throughout Italy. He resorted to every conceivable method to put enemies out of the way and increase his own personal power. Just vain enough to consider himself a master of Statecraft, he was forever devising schemes to crush his enemies and use his friends. If we may accept his own estimate of himself, he was the craftiest politician in Italy. But knowing

as he did the mesh-work of lies which characterized all his relations with the other princes of Italy, it was only natural that he should at times be dominated by fear. At this particular time his fear had reached a point where it was mingled with terror and alarm. The rightful heir to the dukedom, Giovanni Galeazzo was a prisoner in Pavia, put there and kept there by Ludovico. The wife of Galeazzo was Isabella of Aragon, daughter of Alfonso of Naples. The grievous and outrageous wrongs to her husband Isabella described at length to Alfonso, her father, and to her grandfather, Ferdinand, and published them to all Italy. Alfonso, proud of the prestige of his own house, had more than once threatened Ludovico that he would bring his armies and drive him from his place of power and take from him his ill-gotten gains. The time had now come when it looked as though Alfonso might be able to carry out his threat.

Ludovico was in agonies of fear. He had already failed in a bold scheme to win the favor of Alexander VI. The scheme he had proposed was that the representatives of the three powers which composed the old triple alliance—Florence, Naples and Milan—should visit Rome at the same time, to pay their respects to the new pope. Piero de Medici had his own ambitious plans, and induced Alfonso to decline Ludovico's invitation. It was just then, when in sheer desperation and under mortal fear of what might happen at any moment, that Ludovico, with a shrewdness worthy of the most astute politician, decided to invite the French king to enter Italy and undertake with his help the

conquest of the Neapolitan kingdom, and thus gain the crown which rightfully belonged to him since the death of René of Anjou. "This," says a recent Italian writer, "proved to be the beginning of the long string of disasters which was to desolate Italy for ages to come, destroy her commercial prosperity, stifle her literary and scientific culture, and extinguish every spark of her liberty."

It was greatly in Charles' favor that the field of opportunity in Italy was just then so inviting. No State seemed secure; each was jealous of the other; princes were arrayed against the people, and the people arrayed against the princes. Ludovico could hardly help seeing what everybody else saw, that now was the opportune time for the invader. More than one of the surrounding nations must have been looking with jealous eye upon Italy at this time. The Turks were only waiting the opportune moment; Spain would be ready as soon as she finished her rejoicing over the conquest of a new world; Germany was developing a military power and already looking for something for it to do; Switzerland, with the best infantry in Europe, seemed to be ready for anything which promised gain. "All of these nations, including France, deemed it unpardonable," says a proud-spirited Florentine, "that Italy should still be the world's preceptress, that students from all parts of Europe should flock to her universities; that she should be the sole center of art and literature; that her manners should be imitated, her language studied in every court throughout Christendom; that the writers, artists, philosophers, physicians, astrologers,

and navigators of Italy should still surpass all others in glory as much as her princes and merchants eclipsed all others in wealth." It is hardly possible that all these considerations entered into the thinking of the nations named. Nevertheless, this land beyond the Alps, with its song and story, its wealth and traditions of political prestige, had long been the envy of the Northern nations!

France, under Charles VIII, began "the mighty movement that was to bring life to Europe by Italy's death." This invasion Gibbon describes as "An event which changed the face of Europe." There was little about Charles personally which would lead one to think of him as the leader of a campaign which was to be so momentous in its results. He had almost no education—hardly knew the alphabet, was physically deformed, and seems to have been almost utterly devoid of judgment. But he was eager to rule and ambitious to immortalize his name. His program of conquest was almost bewildering. It included a crusade against the Turks. The conquest of Naples and the relief, as he thought, of the distressed Neapolitans was only incidental to the carrying out of the larger work to which he had been divinely commissioned. Charles did not receive much support from the French barons. Almost to a man they were against the expedition. They knew the character of Ludovico, had no confidence in a pope so vacillating and changeable as Alexander VI, and put much higher estimate than did their king on the strength of Alfonso. Besides, they knew that Charles was utterly without power to carry on a difficult cam-

paign, and that the French treasury was empty. Under these circumstances they did everything in their power to thwart the king's purpose. But Ludovico was urgent, and the powerful Cardinal Rovere, afterwards Pope Julius II, favored the expedition. This was enough for Charles.

The liberty-loving men of Italy looked with favor upon the coming of this great and friendly king from the North, who was to right wrongs and take up the cause of the oppressed. The expedition had been broached by envoys sent from Charles, so that Italy was not actually taken by surprise. When, however, the news spread that he had actually crossed the Alps, and with an army of sixty thousand men, it created widespread feeling of uncertainty and unrest. Stories were current of the great guns the French were bringing, of the immense number of Swiss foot-soldiers, and of the powerful Scots, terrible to look at. All tended to confusion and alarm.

It was the announcement in Florence that Charles VIII had crossed the Alps with great and powerful armies, and that he was devastating cities and massacring the inhabitants which led to that notable coming together of the people in the Duomo to hear what the great preacher would say about it. And when the text was announced, "Behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth," everybody in the Duomo knew that the rushing and roaring waters were near at hand. Charles VIII was the "flood." The preacher's message that morning was a vindication of his own position, and of his own prophecies so oft repeated. It was also a call to

repentance. God would favor Florence, so he told the people, if the people would repent and turn to God, but the wicked would be punished.

It was decided that Piero and a delegation of citizens should go to meet Charles in his camp near Milan to find out definitely whether he would come to Florence, and if so on what terms he would enter the city. Piero, beside himself with fear for himself and his family, broke away from the delegation and went in person to Charles to make terms on his own account. He was received coldly. Fearful lest everything might be taken from him, he promised all the king asked and more. He gave up important fortresses purchased by Florence at immense cost, and promised a fine of 200,000 florins, and besides this offered to give the city of Florence, without condition, to the French king. When the news of this frightful humiliation reached Florence the excitement was intense. To the liberty-loving citizens the time had come to throw off the tyrannical yoke of the Medici and give the people the right to govern their own city.

Again the people crowded to the Duomo to hear what the preacher would say. One revolutionary word from his lips and Florence would have been in the hands of a mob. Men were there ready to sack, burn, or destroy anything and everything which belonged to the Medici. The memory of sixty years of tyranny's fearful bondage, made them eager for any violence or bloodshed which would lead them towards liberty. Many carried concealed weapons and more than one steel corslet was hidden under the closely drawn robes of outraged

Florentines crowded together in the dimly-lighted Duomo. Some were there suspected of being in sympathy with the Medici, others ready to kill any Medicean adherent on the spot, and for the glorious cause of liberty. Wronged men were there who felt keenly that revenge ought to come from some source. It was not an easy task to speak just the right word to such an audience. The very air seemed thick with uncertainty and distrust. Yet there was expectancy, too. Was not Fra Girolamo to preach!

No fitter message was ever brought to a waiting congregation. There was no allusion to politics. Nothing was said about old party or new party. But with tremendous earnestness and deep feeling which touched and moved all who came within the sweep of his mighty and persuasive voice, the preacher pleaded in tones of sympathy, and with a manner which made him seem like God's man as he stood in the pulpit, pleaded for peace, for charity, and for union. "Behold!" he cried, and his voice reached the men standing under the farthest doors of the Duomo, "Behold! the sword has come upon you, and the prophecies are fulfilled. The scourge has begun! Behold! these hosts are led by the Lord, O Florence! The time of singing and dancing is at an end; now is the time to shed floods of tears for thy sins. Thy sins, O Florence! Thy sins, O Rome! Thy sins, O Italy! They have brought these chastisements upon thee! Repent ye, then; give alms, offer up prayers and be united! O my people! I have long been as a father; I have labored all the days of my life to teach you the

truths of straight and of Godly living; yet I have received nothing but tribulation, scorn and contumely; give me at last the consolation of seeing you do good deeds! My people, what desire hath ever been mine but to see you saved, to see you united? Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. But I have said this so many times, and I have cried to you so many times; I have wept for you, O Florence, so many times, that it should be enough. To Thee, I turn O Lord, to Thee who didst die for love of us and for our sins; forgive, O Lord, forgive the Florentine people that would fain become Thy people."

The effect of the sermon upon Savonarola himself was such that he had to be almost carried from the Duomo, so exhausted was he. It was days before he was himself again. The effect upon the people was beyond description. The Duomo had been for them a place of peace! They would repent. They would be united. They would live holy lives. With calm and serious faces they went out into the street as from the very presence of God. During the most trying days of uncertainty which followed not an excess of any kind was committed, and the revolution, which many had expected to see accomplished in the public square with much flowing of red blood, was accomplished in peace in the Palazzo Vecchio. This miracle, for such it was, has been described as unprecedented in Florentine history, and is unanimously attributed by the historians of the time to Savonarola's beneficial ascendency over the minds of the people.

The Council of Seventy called a special meet-

ing to decide upon a course of action. There was much agitation. Every man realized that the safety of Florence hung in the balance. The former method of procedure, no one speaking until he was invited by the Signory, was disregarded. Orsini spoke first. He said something about things going badly, and that it was a time for strong remedies; then became confused and sat down. An ambitious youth, Tani de Nerli by name, in a few passionate words, indorsed the sentiments just uttered, then began to hesitate, and was finally apologized for by his father. Things were not going well. The trouble was, the council had been so long under the domination of the Signory that though the sentiment was strong that something ought to be done, no one seemed to have power to voice the common thought in such a way as to command a hearing and win respect for the spirit of revolt which was in the air. At last Piero Capponi stood up. Something about him commanded attention. He was a man of fine proportions; his hair was white; there were flashes of fire in his eyes, and he had a courageous look that compelled all others to keep silence. Like our own General Grant, this Capponi was a man of few words, but of resolute deeds. In a short address which might almost be described as a Declaration of Independence for Florence, Capponi won every man there to the conviction that the time had come for prompt and decisive action. These were his words: "Piero de' Medici is no longer fit to rule the State; the Republic must provide for itself; *the moment has come to shake off this baby govern-*

ment." These patriotic words have been ringing through Florentine history ever since. "Let ambassadors," said Capponi, "be sent to King Charles, and should they meet Piero by the way, let them pass him without salutation and let them explain that he has caused all the evil, and that the city is well disposed to the French. Let honorable men be chosen to give a fitting welcome to the king; but at the same time let all the captains and soldiery be summoned from the country and hidden away in the cloisters and other secret places; besides all the soldiery, let all men be prepared to fight in case of need, so that when we shall have done our best to act honestly toward this most Christian monarch, and to satisfy with money the avarice of the French, we may be ready to face him and show our teeth, if he shall try us beyond our patience, either by word or by deed. And, above all," urged Capponi, "it must not be forgotten to send Father Girolamo Savonarola as one of the ambassadors, for he has gained the entire love of the people."

The ambassadors were chosen, five of them,—Capponi, Nerli, and Savonarola were in the number. Four started immediately on their mission. Savonarola waited to once more address the people. His farewell words in the Duomo were these: "The Lord hath granted thy prayer and brought great revolution by peaceful means. God alone came to rescue the city when it was forsaken of all. Wait and thou shalt see the disasters which will happen elsewhere. Therefore, be steadfast in good works, O people of Florence; be steadfast in

peace. If thou wouldst have the Lord steadfast in mercy, be thou merciful to thy brethren, thy friends, and thy enemies; otherwise thou shalt surely be smitten by the scourges prepared for the rest of Italy. 'I love mercy,' crieth the Lord unto you. Woe to him that obeyeth not His commands." The sermon done, Savonarola started for Pisa. There he met the king and his fellow ambassadors.

Piero de' Medici, then in the king's camp, soon found that these ambassadors represented a government which had left him out. Pleading earnestly for the king's support, and promising big sums of money, he started for Florence. The welcome he received when he returned was not to his liking. The Florence he had come to was not the Florence he had left. A revolution had taken place, and a new order had been established. On the day after his arrival, discouraged by the cold bearing of the Signory, by the averted countenances of former friends, and by revolutionists crowding toward the Riccardi palace under the leadership of Valori, he hastened from his palace and fled from the city through the San Gallo Gate. This was the gate through which Savonarola had entered twelve years before. Even the dregs of Florence now looked upon Piero with contempt as he ran through the San Gallo Gate to save his life. "I would rather have been hacked to pieces," said Bentivoglio to him when he reached Bologna, "than to abandon my State in this fashion." These were the words of a braggart. It was not long before Bentivoglio played the coward as beautifully as Piero had done. Once and again Piero de' Medici tried to get back

into Florence, but all in vain. The power of the Medici was broken. Piero's cousins, on returning to Florence, stripped the shields with the balls on them from their houses, and changed their name from Medici to Popolani.

Savonarola was not in Florence now, and the crowd collected by Valori was intoxicated with a desire for pillage. They went through the house of Giovanni de' Medici, and broke into the garden near San Marco where Lorenzo had gathered rich treasures of art. The Signory, together with men who looked to Savonarola for guidance, did everything in their power to quell disturbances and keep the peace. But unfavorable news had come concerning the attitude of the king. Charles would give the ambassadors no definite answer. There was much anxiety as to what news the prior would bring when he came.

After the other ambassadors had made their plea and had left Pisa, Savonarola made his way to the French camp and into the king's presence. Losing no time in preliminaries, and coming at once to the purpose of his mission, Savonarola addressed the French monarch thus: "O, most Christian king, thou art an instrument in the hands of the Lord who sendeth thee to relieve the woe in Italy, as for many years I have foretold; and He sendeth thee to reform the Church which now lieth prostrate in the dust. If thou be not just and merciful; if thou shouldst fail to respect the city of Florence, its women, its citizens and its liberties; if thou shouldst forget the task the Lord hath sent thee to perform, then will He choose another

to fulfill it; His hand shall smite thee and chastise thee with terrible scourges. These things say I unto thee in the name of the Lord."

His message delivered, Savonarola returned to Florence. Two men were now looked upon as the men of the hour: Savonarola, who preached unity, charity, and peace, and Capponi, who collected men and armies for the defense of the city. Every house was made an arsenal. Hired troops to the number of six thousand were secretly quartered in available places throughout the city. Material for barricading the streets was packed away in convenient places. Charles was to be received as though coming on a friendly visit but, "if he showed his teeth," the city was to be in arms.

On the 17th of November Charles arrived, clad in black velvet and gold brocade, and riding on a proud charger; he entered the city with lance leveled. The army made a great display, and the Florentines opened their eyes in wonder at what they saw. But Capponi! Well, he knew the city was prepared for any emergency. And Valori, the Cato of Florence! He, too, was confident. With the utmost courtesy Charles was shown to the Riccardi palace which had been fitted up for his use. That night the city was a blaze of illuminations, and there were feastings and amusements. The next day also was given up to gayety. The citizens were then ready for an answer to their question, namely—the terms on which Charles had entered their city and the nature of the treaty he desired to make with them? They soon learned that the leveled lance meant something. It was no easy matter, and they

were not long in finding it out, to make terms with the haughty king. By the merest accident Charles was given to know more about Florence than he had seen while riding through the streets on his gayly caparisoned charger. Some French soldiers were going about the streets one day dragging Italian prisoners of war, and forcing them to beg money to secure their ransom. A daring citizen cut some of the ropes and the prisoners escaped. The soldiers were furious, and there was riot in the street. Then at a single stroke of the alarm bell, barricades began to go up; armed soldiers filled the streets; sticks, stones, and pieces of iron rained from house windows on the heads of the Swiss infantry. When order was finally restored, the soldiers slipped quietly into their hiding-places and the barricades disappeared. Charles and his army had never seen anything like this before and they were impressed by it.

The Signory now saw an opportunity to hasten the treaty negotiations. The main points had already been settled, except as to the amount of money to be paid. Piero's offer had led Charles to expect much more than Florence was able to pay. Messengers were continually going back and forth between the Signory and the king until there was much weariness and unrest on both sides. The king finally brought matters to a conclusion, though not to the conclusion he expected, by ordering his secretary to read his ultimatum, which was refused on the spot. The king, furious with rage, blurted out in threatening tone, "Then we will sound our trumpets." Quick as a flash Capponi sprang to the

most popular achievement of his life. Snatching the paper from the secretary's hand, he tore it in pieces, and trampling it in rage beneath his feet, answered the threat to sound trumpets, with the immortal words, *"And we will ring our bells!"* Charles had heard the alarm bell ring in Florence once. He did not care to hear it again. The terms of the treaty were quickly agreed upon and the instrument signed. With happy play on words Macchiavelli describes this event by saying that even the clash of arms and stamping of steeds could not drown "La voce d' un Cappon fra cento Galli" ("The crow of a Capon among a hundred cocks").

The treaty provided that there should be friendly relations between the Republic and the king; that Charles should have the title "Protector of the liberties of Florence;" that 120,000 florins should be paid; that the fortresses were to be held not more than two years, and that the Pisans should be pardoned for their recent revolutionary actions as soon as they resumed allegiance to Florence; and that the Medici were to be banished and their estates were to remain confiscated until all of Piero's debts were paid. Both parties met in the Duomo and solemnly pledged that all parts of the treaty should be carefully observed. That night the city was illuminated again.

On the morrow Florence began to get ready to say farewell to her royal guest, but the king did not take his leave that day, or the next day; nor did he go on the day after that. Florence became restless again. Business was at a standstill, there were bad goings on at night, the hosts were be-

coming weary of their guests. In a diplomatic way the king was given to understand that his stay was becoming a burden and that the time had come for his departure. But Charles was enjoying his quarters in the Riccardi palace, and gave no intimation that he had any thought of taking his leave. Matters in the city were becoming serious.

The citizens again appealed to Savonarola, who all this time had been urging the people to throw aside all personal ambitions and animosities, to have regard only to the general good, and, with the firm resolve, to promote the unity and concord of their city; then indeed would they be acceptable in the Lord's sight. Capponi's brilliant and heroic passage at arms in the palace, by which the king was brought to terms, did not count more for the good of Florence than the commanding voice of Savonarola which kept the city in peace. The appeal now made by the citizens was that Savonarola should do more than preach from the pulpit. They wanted him to go in person to Charles and influence him to leave the city, and do it immediately. Every other means had been tried. Savonarola knew what a difficult task it was, but he did not hesitate. He went at once to the palace, and, passing straight by officers, lords and barons, faced the king with his message: "Most Christian Prince! Thy stay here is causing great injury both to our city and thine own enterprise. Thou losest time, forgetful of the duty imposed upon thee by Providence, and to the serious hurt of thy spiritual welfare and worldly fame. Hearken now to the voice of God's servant! Pur-

sue thy journey without delay. Seek not to bring ruin on this city and thereby rouse the anger of the Lord against thee." There was something about this man of God; something in his serious face, penetrating eye, commanding voice, and the bloodless hand holding aloft the crucifix, that made him irresistible. On the morrow Charles left Florence.

There was but one judgment now concerning Savonarola. He was a true prophet of all the things which had occurred. He it was who deserved the credit of influencing the king's conduct on entering Florence and during his stay in the city. And he it was also who had induced Charles to depart when no one else could move him.

The party of the people was now in full control, and Savonarola ruled the will of the people. Everything seemed to conspire to augment the preacher's popularity and increase his power. Pico della Mirandola, dying on the very day Charles entered Florence, requested that he be clothed in the habit of St. Dominic and interred in the Church of San Marco. Poliziano, too, his honors all gone and hated of the people, died with a prayer of penitence on his lips. He, too, had earnestly requested that he might be buried in the cloak of a Dominican, and that his body might lie beside that of Pico in the Church of San Marco. It could not fail to attract increased attention to Savonarola that these two celebrated Florentines, like Lorenzo the Magnificent, had turned to San Marco at the last hour. The Prior of San Marco was rapidly becoming the people's hero.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PREACHER AND THE NEW CONSTITUTION.

Just four days after the departure of Charles the great bell of the Palazzo Vecchio rang out to call a *Parlamento*. This was not unlike a modern town meeting, except that it was much larger. All the men of the city came together to express their judgment on any important matter. This had the look of democracy, but there was little of democracy about it. The Parlamento was the instrument of tyrants. But it was the old order, and Florence knew nothing better as yet. The Signory now appeared before this gathering of the people with a request that they be given the privilege of appointing twenty men with power to elect a new Signory and other necessary magistrates. The request was granted, and the government of "The Twenty" took the place of the old Medicean government of "The Seventy." All other forms and offices remained the same. There were the three higher offices—the Signory, eight in number; the Confalonieres of the Companies, sixteen in number; and the Buoni Uomini, twelve in number. There were also "The Ten of War," "The Eight of Guard and Custody," and the two councils, which under Lorenzo had become one.

The new government promised much, but it was soon found to have limitations. Power was entirely in the hands of the Signory. These eight men "passed the laws, dispatched ambassadors, declared war, and frequently acted as a tribunal of justice, pronouncing sentence of death and confiscation." The Twenty, with no such personality back of them as the Seventy had had in Lorenzo's day, soon discovered that their authority was only nominal. It was necessary to have a government which could do something. There were serious matters to be attended to. There was rebellion among the Pisans to be put down; other cities were in revolt; King Charles was urgently demanding money. Florence needed a stronger and more effective government, and that right away. Discussions among the citizens began and increased. Some urged a Great Council such as Venice had. Others maintained that Florence ought to devise a government of her own without imitating Venice. It seemed at times that there were only two ways open —one in the direction of tyranny, the other in the direction of anarchy. Two eminent Doctors of Law, Vespucci and Soderini, finally came forward with a plan. The plan involved the substitution of a general council of the people for all former councils, and the creation of a lesser council composed of men of age and experience. The government of the Twenty was to be abolished. The Signory, the Ten, and the Gonfalonieres of the Companies were to be maintained. There was much talk and wrangling, and some serious discussion of the proposed changes. The longer the matter was dis-

cussed, the more undecided the people seemed to be as to the wisdom of the plan. Charges of ulterior motive began to be made. There was crimination and recrimination. Vespucci and Soderini could not make the majority of the people believe that their constitution was the one Florence needed. Valori, great popular leader though he was, was not equal to the emergency which the city now faced. Even Capponi, brave and courageous old soldier, was not strong enough to lead Florence in these days of political crises. Again the people turned to San Marco.

Savonarola had not been idle. He had been devoting himself unselfishly to the interests of the city. But he had not allowed himself to be drawn into political discussions. His one great care had been the poor and the unemployed. "Forsake pomp and vanities," he cried out in his pulpit. "Sell all superfluous things, and bestow the money on the poor. Citizens! let us collect alms in every church for the poor, in the city and outside the walls. Devote to the poor for one year at least, the funds of the Pisan University (then suspended); if this should not suffice, let us take the church plate and decorations, and I will be the first to set you the example. But, above all things, pass a law that shops may be opened and work provided for the populace now idling in the streets." In a most remarkable way the people responded to these calls for help, and large sums of money were collected. Day after day he urged the people to charity: "This is the time for words to give place to deeds, vain ceremonies to real feelings. The Lord said: 'I was

a hungered and ye gave me no meat; I was naked and ye clothed me not.' He did not say: Ye built me not fine churches, nor fine convents. He did but exhort you to works of charity; therefore by charity shall all things be renewed."

While men were looking to Savonarola with the hope that he would say something which would throw light on the grave constitutional crisis which faced Florence, he was fairly abandoning himself in pleading for the poor and devising plans to provide work for the unemployed. What more could he do? But he must do more. He had already said and done so much for the welfare of Florence that the people demanded some suggestive word from him now.

Before touching the constitution, the two things most immediately necessary were: first, to provide against the return of Piero; and, second, to prevent the personal enemies of Piero from venting their wrath upon his adherents still in the city. The former was the easier to do. The latter was the task of Savonarola. He gave himself to it with the wisdom of a patriot and the spirit of a saint. Day after day in the Duomo he pointed out that the grave political crisis which was upon them demanded unselfish action on the part of those who cared for the welfare of Florence. Again and again he cried out from the pulpit: "Florence, forgive, and make peace, and cry not again: 'Flesh, and more flesh, blood and more blood.' Forgive! Forgive!"

In a paragraph which stirs one's blood, Villari has shown what it meant for Savonarola to accept responsibility at this crisis. Here are his words:

"Undoubtedly the grandest lesson taught us by history is that of seeing how in terrible moments such as these, when the world seems to be at the mercy of brute force, and the earth threatened with chaos; when rank and power, science and wealth are alike impotent; when courage itself is vanquished by the unbridled audacity of the mob—help is only to be obtained from virtue, generous resolve, and unselfish love of goodness. Thus Fra Girolamo Savonarola was fated to be the savior of Florence. The hour had struck for his appearance in the arena of politics; and notwithstanding the firm determination with which he had hitherto held aloof from it, he was now compelled to obey the summons by the pressure of events."

Nothing shows more clearly the spirit and purpose of Savonarola in accepting a share of the responsibility for deciding upon a governmental policy, than an extract from one of his sermons. "The Lord has driven my bark into the open sea, the wind drives me forward, and the Lord forbids my return. I communed last night with the Lord and said: 'Pity me, O Lord; lead me back to my haven.' 'It is impossible; see you not that the wind is contrary?' 'I will preach if so I must; but why need I meddle with the government of Florence?' 'If thou wouldst make Florence a holy city, thou must establish her on firm foundations, and give her a government which favors virtue.' 'But Lord, I am not sufficient for these things.' 'Knowest thou not that God chooses the weak of this world to confound the mighty? Thou art the instrument, I am the doer.' Then was I convinced and cried,

'Lord, I will do Thy will; but tell me what shall be my reward?' 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard.' 'But in this life, Lord?' 'My son, the servant is not above his master. The Jews made Me die on the cross; a like lot awaits thee.' 'Yea Lord, let me die as Thou didst die for me.' Then He said, 'Wait yet a while; let that be done which must be done, then arm thyself with courage."

In all his relations to the government of Florence Savonarola never got away from the idea that Florence was to be made a holy city, a city favorable to virtue and established on the firm foundation of righteousness. In no other way could he justify his participation in the affairs of State. Almost his first words were against tyrants. To him the word tyrant signified a man of evil life, a man of greater wickedness than other men, an usurper of others' rights. The first law he pleaded for was a law that henceforth no one man should be the head of the city. To do otherwise meant building on the sand. Those who would fain rise above other men, who could not tolerate civil equality, these were to him desperately wicked, destroyers of souls and of States. "Your reform," said he, "must begin with spiritual things, for these are higher than material things, of which they are the rule and the life; and likewise all temporal good must be subordinate to the moral and religious good, from which it depends. If, perchance, ye have heard it said that 'States can not be governed by Paternosters,' (a saying attributed to Cosimo de' Medici), remember that is the maxim of tyrants; of men hostile to God and

the common welfare, a rule for the oppression, not for the relief and liberation of a city. But if, on the contrary, you desire a good government, you must submit it to God. Certainly I would take no concern for a State that should not be subject to Him."

If Savonarola was to speak any direct word to influence the form of a new constitution, he must do it quickly. The plan which he first outlined was as follows: "When ye shall have purified your hearts, rectified your aims, condemned gambling, sensuality, and blasphemy, then set to work to frame your government; first making a rough draft of it, afterwards proceeding to details and amendments. And let your first draft, or rather model and basis of government, be conceived in such wise: that no man may receive any benefit save by the will of the whole people, who must have the sole right of creating magistrates and enacting laws." Here was a complete change from the old order, a death blow to tyranny. But he goes on, "The form of government best adapted to this city, would be that of a Grand Council on the Venetian plan." He then recommended the assembling of all the people in their proper companies, and suggested that each company propose a form of government. From these the Gonfaloniere was to select four; and from these four the Signory was to choose the one best adapted to Florence. "I believe," said he, "that the Venetian model will be the one chosen, and you need hold it no shame to imitate the Venetians, because they, too, received it from the Lord, whence all good things

come. You have seen how, since that government has been established in Venice, no factions nor dissensions of any sort have arisen, therefore we must needs believe that it exists by God's will."

Savonarola now had frequent visitors in San Marco for advice on matters pertaining to the constitution. He was often seen on his way to the Palazzo Vecchio, where two or three times he preached on the moral aspects of the constitutional question then before Florence. On an appointed day he preached in the Duomo to men only. All the magistrates were there, and the men of the city were there. It was an eventful gathering. Four conclusions were clearly set forth and maintained by the preacher. First, the fear of God and the restoration of good manners and customs. Second, the love of popular government and of the public good, setting aside all private interests. Third, a general amnesty, by which they should absolve the friends of the past government from all faults, remitting all fines, and showing indulgence toward those who were indebted to the State. Fourth, to constitute a form of universal government, which should comprehend all its citizens, to whom, according to the ancient ordinance of the city, the government belonged. In this sermon he again expressed his belief that the Grand Council of Venice, with some modifications, perhaps, was the one best suited to Florence. There was a decision and ring about his words which dispelled all doubt. The people went out from the Duomo shouting, *"Il Consiglio Grande! Il Consiglio Grande!"* The matter of the constitution was settled. There was

nothing left for the Signory but to confirm the decision of the people, a decision made under the influence of the mighty preacher.

Without attempting to mark, step by step, the movements which finally led to good order and good government in Florence, it is enough to say that within one year from the day Piero fled from the San Gallo Gate, a reform had been accomplished in Florence the like of which has seldom been seen. The new constitution had been framed, the people had been led in a remarkably short space of time to feel something of responsibility for self-government, a spirit of real patriotism had been developed and a desire for a well ordered city, the tyrant had been driven out and a government of the people established. And think of it! Not a sword drawn; not one drop of blood spilled on any street; no violent dissensions; and all this in Florence, a city notorious for its rioting and bitter dissensions among leading families. And one man did it all! Did it from the pulpit of the Duomo! No wonder his work has been described by Villari as "an example without precedent in the history of the might of human utterances and the human will."

CHAPTER XIII.

JESUS KING OF FLORENCE.

It was now that the citizens of Florence brought out the famous bronze statue of Judith and Holophernes, formerly the property of the Medici, and with much enthusiasm set it up at the gateway of the Palazzo Vecchio. They placed it there in recognition of the fact that a new era had begun for Florence. And they put upon it an inscription testifying to all who should pass, from then until now, that it was a memorial of the securing of stable and safe government for Florence under the constitution.

During these months in which the Republic was being established, and even before this time, Savonarola had now and then dreamed of an order of things in Florence, towards the realization of which he more and more gave the enthusiasm of his life. His vision was not that of Plato's Ideal Republic, but a Christian State, in which the principles of Christianity should actually influence the government at all points, a State in which the manners of the people should be determined by the Divine influence of Jesus Christ working in the hearts of men, a State in which Jesus should actually be king. In his vision he saw Florence as a "holy city." Great souls who have dreamed this same dream in the centuries intervening have found

how difficult, nay, impossible, of realization is the dream. The vision is with us yet; but forever above us, not realized. But the fact that men see it, is making the world better.

Savonarola loved Florence, and he wanted for his city a government and a manner of life which God could approve. It was a bold dream. The first time he made known to the people his high ambition was in one of the Advent sermons of 1494. He was discoursing from the Book of Haggai on various forms of government, monarchial and others. The intense political excitement of the time made such a theme one which would hold the closest attention. While the audience hung breathlessly on his words, waiting in suspense for what might come next, the preacher, knowing that the supreme question in the people's mind was the form of government which should be adopted, exclaimed, "Well, Florence, God is willing to satisfy thee, and to give thee a government, a king to govern thee. This king is Christ. The Lord will govern thee himself, if thou consent, O Florence! Suffer thyself to be guided by Him. Take Christ for thy master, and remain subject to His law."

He then went on to show what an influence for good Florence might have, not only in Italy but among other nations, if she would only accept such Divine sovereignty as he had described. In the very climax of his sermon, when the interest of the audience was at highest tension, he threw out this startling and thrilling challenge: *"Florence! Jesus Christ, who is King of the universe, hath willed to become thy King. Wilt thou have Him*

for thy King?" It was a supreme moment. The audience, swayed by the bold and mighty thought of the preacher, hesitated, then responded to the challenge, and shouted as with one voice, *"Gesu Christo nostro Re!"* (Jesus Christ our King.) Florence had a new slogan now. When the sermon was done men shouted it in the Piazza and on the streets, *Gesu Christo nostro Re!* Everywhere they shouted it. Jesus had been chosen King of Florence.

No one saw more clearly than Savonarola, that it would be no easy matter to transform Florence into the city he had seen in his vision. He now gave himself most earnestly to the work of moral reform. Florence was at this time the victim of the most degrading vices. Crimes not to be named were prevalent, not among the poorer classes only, but among the rich. "Your life," said the preacher, pleading earnestly with the people to live clean and pure lives, "your life is the life of swine." The testimony of contemporary historians is evidence that the charge was hardly extravagant. In all his sermons now he cried out, even more strongly than before, against the corruptions in high place and low which were a blight upon the city. He earnestly entreated the people to break away from all their sins and evil doings, and become true subjects of the new Sovereign.

Not content with bringing his message to the people, Savonarola again and again appealed to the magistrates to take vigorously in hand the work of reforming the city. More than once he told them that their constitution could not do the work,

nor any of their councils; it must be done by definite action on their part and by the personal activity of the men charged with the government of the city. "Magistrates," he said on one occasion, "it is to you that I address myself. Put down these vices, destroy these sins, punish this horrid passion which is against nature; and not merely by a private fine, but in public, that all Italy may know it. Expose all the courtesans in a public place, and send them off to the sound of trumpets! But you say, 'O Father! there are so many of them that this would be to upset the whole city.' Well, then, begin with one; then go on to the rest! And if you can not give them chastity, you can at least teach them decency. Punish gamblers; for, be well assured gambling still goes on. Give orders Signors, that none shall play in the streets at great games or small. Have the tongues of blasphemers pierced! St. Louis, King of France, had the lips of a blasphemer cauterized, and said: 'I should be happy to have as much done to myself if I could at such a price have my kingdom clear of such offenders.' Put down dancing, too, for this is not a time to dance. Prohibit balls in town and country." These words sound very like the words of Puritanism. But before criticising Savonarola too severely for advocating such harsh and drastic methods of reform, his detractors ought to be made to tell just what the shameless moral condition of Florence was at this time. Read Fra Filippo Lippi as a hint of what it was! There are times when drastic methods are the only methods worth trying. Hildebrand was drastic in his meth-

ods. So were Luther and Knox. So was Cromwell.

The transformations in the social life of Florence, from 1495 to 1497, read like the story of miracles. The whole aspect of the city was changed. Finery and jewelry were cast aside; women dressed plainly on the streets; money which had before been spent for ornament and display was now given to the poor; theaters and taverns were empty; cards and dice disappeared; the churches were crowded; alms-boxes were well-filled; tradesmen and bankers restored their ill-gotten gains; purity, sobriety, and justice prevailed in the city, and the Prior of San Marco was everywhere hailed as the greatest public benefactor.

But it was a long distance from the old Florence with the old constitution to the new Florence with the new constitution. Savonarola found, as men find in our day, that thorough-going municipal reform is a slow process, and does not come about by simply making a new constitution. Opposition to reform had been lurking about in Florence from the very beginning of Savonarola's ascendency in the pulpit of the Duomo. Now that he was attempting to break up the old order entirely and establish a new city, opposition to him assumed more definite form and gathered strength.

Many who believed in the popular government because they thought it favorable to liberty had no sympathy whatever for Savonarola as a religious reformer. The adherents of the Medici, the Bigi, bitterly opposed the administration which had driven out their chief; they attempted the same part

played by the royalists of England two centuries later in the overthrow of Puritanism and the restoration of Charles II. The Aristocrats, too, had a party furiously opposed to the reformer and his followers. But the opposition which overtopped all others was centered in Rome. The pope now rose to strike down the reformer of the North, who had dared speak out so boldly against the Church. The man who had braved the cunning and flattery of Lorenzo was now called upon to measure swords with the mightiest monarch of Christendom. Alexander VI had political power unmatched; he was the spiritual head of the Church; he held the keys of Christendom,—in unholy hands it is true, but they were the keys of St. Peter. A more unequal contest could hardly be imagined. What it was the following pages will tell.

CHAPTER XIV.

LETTERS, PLOTS AND PAPAL BRIEFS.

At the close of the Lenten season in 1495 Savonarola was at the climax of his power and influence. No question was discussed, social, political, religious, or moral, that Fra Girolamo was not quoted as the final authority. Yet he never delivered a political address, never harangued the crowd in the street, never was seen in social gatherings, never spoke at any of the tradespeople's meetings. He was never heard except from the pulpit. The pulpit was his throne of power, and from it he ruled Florence. He was the acknowledged spiritual and political dictator of the city. And that, too, by glad common consent, for his was "a heavenly despotism." But, as stated in the last chapter, there was a lurking opposition to Savonarola which began with his popularity. When he became the acknowledged master of Florence, and particularly when he began the reforms which so radically changed the character of the city, jealousy, envy, and hatred, became increasingly active, and the opposition began to come out into the open.

There were five political parties in Florence, the *Bigi,* the *Bianchi,* the *Arrabbiati,* the *Compagnacci,* and the *Piagnoni.* The last named was the great party of the people, which for a time seemed

to carry everything before it. It was the party of Savonarola. The name Piagnoni, meaning "the weepers," was given in derision. The Piagnoni were strongly opposed to the Medici, believed in popular government, were in full sympathy with the movement for moral reform, and were the stout defenders of the rights of the people. They could always be depended upon to take up arms in defense of the city. They were the devout and honest-minded men of all classes. The Arrabbiati, or "the furious," were the fierce and implacable opponents of Savonarola. They included many men of wealth and rank, whose ambition was to restore to Florence the aristocratic form of government which existed before the Medici came into power. They were strongly opposed both to Savonarola and the Medici. A section of this party came to unenviable notoriety later as the Compagnacci, "the evil companions." With Dolfo Spini as their leader, they stopped at no outrage or indecency which would in any way break the power of Savonarola. The Bianchi, or "the whites" as they were called, were the radicals of Florence. They were in the main favorable to the popular government, but objected to the limited franchise, and did not care much for religion. The Bigi, or "the grays," were the adherents of the Medici. Their organization was secret. Though under great obligation to Savonarola for the general amnesty act which made it possible for them to live in peace and safety, they early began their intrigues for Piero's return, and were among the most treacherous of all Savonarola's enemies.

Early in this year of great popularity Savonarola received a brief from Rome directing him to preach the Lenten sermons for that year at Lucca. This without doubt was the work of the Arrabbiati, who did not at all like the way Savonarola was giving direction to the affairs of State. The prior's reforms and political measures were offensive to them. When the contents of the brief became known, the Signory and the Council of Ten drew up letters of remonstrance, asking for the recall of the papal brief, explaining that conditions in the city were such that Savonarola could not be spared at that time. These remonstrances, together with several private letters had the desired effect, and Savonarola was allowed to remain in the pulpit of the Duomo. It is not difficult to understand why it was so easy to secure the recall of this papal brief. Charles VIII of France was in Naples, and he was still the Protector of the Liberties of Florence. There were good and valid reasons why Alexander did not care just now to incur the ill will of Charles.

In the summer following the Lenten sermons which contributed so largely to the advancement of the reform movement, Florence was greatly disturbed by the announcement that Charles VIII was marching north from Naples, and that Piero de' Medici was with him. The expedition of the French had been one continuous triumph from the time they had crossed the Alps until now. But a change had come. Ludovico, the Moor, with other Italian princes, began to discover that the French were not in Italy with purpose to reform, but to

plunder for their own personal advantage. Ludovico felt that something ought to be done, and began at once to decide upon a plan to drive out the invader. The plan he devised was the organization of the "Holy League," the ostensible purpose of which was to defend Italy against the Turks and protect the rights of the Chair of St. Peter. The real purpose was to drive the French from Italy, and that as quickly as possible. The parties composing this league were the pope, the emperor, the King of Spain, the Republic of Venice, and the Duke of Milan. The French ambassador, the shrewd De Commines, then at the court of Venice, saw at once the purpose of the league, and dispatched a quick messenger to his master in Naples, urging immediate departure for France. It is said that De Commines himself proceeded to Florence for an interview with the man who had prophesied the coming of Charles to Italy, to inquire whether he would be able to depart in safety. "Tell his majesty, the most Christian king," said Savonarola, "that God has conferred upon him many benefits, and has granted him to acquire so great a kingdom without difficulty, and although since then he has committed many sins, God will not fail him, and he need have no doubts as to his enemies, for he will return with victory into his own kingdom of France."

When the news came to Florence that Charles and his army were actually approaching their territory the whole city was aroused. The Arrabbiati and the Piagnoni were one in their purpose to protect Florence against another visit from Charles

and his plundering soldiers. In this crisis the Arrabbiati prayed as well as counseled for the protection of their city. It would seem that Savonarola felt there was almost too much praying at times in proportion to some other things that needed to be done. "Offer prayers," he said one day in the pulpit, "but do not neglect human precautions. We must help ourselves in every way, by every means, and then the Lord will be with us. Courage, my brethren, and above all things union. If you will remain united and agree in one will, even if the whole world were against us, the victory will be ours."

A delegation was sent to Charles to learn, if possible, his plans. They found him at Siena but he received them coldly, was curt and churlish. Every question they asked brought a rough reply. They inquired by what road he intended to march through their territory, in order that they might furnish supplies? The blunt answer was, "Furnish your whole territory." It is not at all surprising that the interview was so unsatisfactory. Charles knew that the city of Florence was in arms, and the delegation knew that Piero, their most bitter enemy, was in the king's camp.

It was only bad news that the ambassadors brought back to Florence. The city was filled with alarm. Once more the authorities turned to Savonarola. Arrabbiati as well as Piagnoni declared that only the Prior of San Marco could avert the coming calamity. Savonarola had written several letters to Charles since their interview in the Riccardi palace nine months before. In these letters

he had charged him, as the chosen instrument of God, to be faithful to the work to which he had been divinely commissioned, and warned him of the judgment of God which would come upon him in case of disobedience. It was at Poggionsi that Savonarola again faced the haughty King of France. In prophetic tone he reminded him of their former conferences, of his broken faith with God, and of his present situation as a fugitive surrounded by new and uncertain perils. "Most Christian prince," the message sounds like Isaiah, "thou hast provoked the Lord to anger by breaking faith with the Florentines, by forsaking the task of reforming the Church, that the Lord had so often announced to thee by my lips, and for which he had chosen thee by such manifest signs. Thou wilt escape from the present dangers; but shouldst thou fail to resume thy abandoned task, shouldst thou fail to obey the commands which the Lord once more repeateth to thee by the voice of his poor servant, I tell thee that still heavier woes shall be poured upon thee by His wrath, and that another shall be chosen in thy stead." The king, it is said, was terror struck by the manner and message of the man who had prophesied his coming and now so fearlessly warned him of his duty. Orders were given that the army should immediately march towards Pisa. Savonarola was earnestly entreated to accompany the king on the march. He did go with him for a short distance, but at Castel Fiorentino he spoke a farewell message and returned to Florence.

On the 21st of June Savonarola announced from the Duomo pulpit that the danger was over. The

announcement was made in most characteristic fashion. "Here I am once more among you. You ask me, 'Father, have you brought us some good news?' Yes, good news; I bring nothing but good news. You know that in time of prosperity I brought you bad news, and now in your tribulation I bring nothing but good news; good news for Florence." "I have been yonder in the camp," he went on to say, "which is like being in hell. Do not ever allow yourself to desire to be a great lord, for such men never have an hour of true peace and happiness." He then described how he had gone to his majesty the king, and what message he had brought him. "He heard me with kindness," said the preacher, "and promised me to do what I bade him." Charles did not do all he promised. He did, however, refrain from trying to enter Florence again.

Savonarola now stood high in public favor. His praises were on the lips of all. But the departure of Charles gave Rome an opportunity. The great French king was no longer the effective Protector of the Liberties of Florence. Before describing how Rome seized the opportunity offered for silencing the preacher whose words had been so offensive, something ought to be said about a serious menace to the fortunes of the Republic, which was nothing less than the attempt of Piero to return to power. Savonarola suspected that a secret movement was on, and gave himself with great energy to the bringing about of a change in the constitution which would save Florence from drifting again into the hands of tyrants. There

still existed under the constitution the possibility of calling a *Parlamento*. Savonarola knew that the safety of the State depended on the Great Council already established. He would have every member of the Signory take an oath on entering office that he would not call, or have any part in calling, a Parlamento. "If any one will do this," said he one day from the pulpit, "if he be of the Signory, let his head be struck off; if he be not of it, let him be declared a rebel, and his goods confiscated." Then, in words which seem far from what is proper in the pulpit, he said: "If the Signory, as a body, should endeavor to summon a Parlamento, the moment they appear in front of the Palazzo any man may cut them to pieces without being guilty of sin." Such extravagance and violence of speech was freely excused by the Florentines a little later, when the news came that Piero had raised an army and was marching against the city gates.

The enterprise failed utterly and Piero was disgraced, even in the eyes of his friends. But more than ever the liberty-loving citizens of Florence saw the importance of doing everything in their power to protect their city against the return of the tyrant. They, therefore, shouted in praise of Savonarola when he cried out in the pulpit that whoever would seek to bring back the Medici to Florence should be put to death. "Will you who pay no respect to Christ, have respect to private citizens? Do justice, I tell you. Off with his head! Even were he the chief of the first family in the city, off, I say, with his head! Trust in naught but the Great Council, which is the work of God

and not of man, and whosoever would change it, or set up a tyrant, or place the government in the hands of private citizens, let him be accursed of the Lord forever." These are severe words, but they fairly represent the intense spirit of patriotism which prevailed in Florence in the driving out of the Medici and in the making of the new constitution.

Charles gone and Piero gone, the way was now open for the Arrabbiati and Alexander. Ludovico, the Moor, too, saw an opportunity. The people's preacher, so Ludovico had been told, had reflected in some of his sermons on his "fair name" and he would be avenged. Piero and Fra Mariano, both now in Rome, were eager to indorse, amplify, and exaggerate any reports which told of Fra Girolamo's outspoken arraignment of the leaders of the Church and the corruptions of the court of Rome. The Arrabbiati took pains that all previous criticisms of the Prior of San Marco should now be repeated in Rome. The pope was urged to silence the voice which had been raised so effectively against vice and bad government in Florence, and which had brought about such transformations in the city that scenes of revelry and debauch were almost a thing of the past. They made much of the prior's prophecies and visions, but what they most complained of, good Catholics that they were, was his open criticisms of the Holy Father.

The pope had long been smothering his wrath and waiting an opportunity to strike the daring preacher. The opportunity had now come. A papal brief was addressed to Savonarola dated July

25, 1495. It runs as follows: "To our well beloved son, greeting and apostolic benediction: We have heard that of all the workers in the Lord's vineyard, thou art the most zealous; at the which we deeply rejoice, and give thanks to Almighty God. We have likewise heard that thou dost assert that thy predictions of the future proceed not from thee but from God; wherefore we desire, as behooves our pastoral office, to have speech with thee concerning these things; so that being, by thy means, better informed of God's will, we may be the better able to fulfill it. Wherefore, by thy vow of holy obedience, we enjoin thee to wait on us without delay, and shall welcome thee with loving kindness."

The friends of Savonarola believed that this invitation meant simply a dungeon in the Castle of St. Angelo. The Arrabbiati were now openly boasting of their influence at the court of Rome. More than once plots had been discovered by which they had purposed by steel or poison to take the life of the man whose lashings and stinging rebukes they had so keenly felt. Savonarola had already announced to the people that his exhausted physical condition would make it necessary for him to discontinue his sermons for a time. With his high ideals of obedience there was nothing for him to do but to yield submission to papal authority, but he determined to preach one more sermon before writing his reply. It was one of his "terrible sermons;" so he said afterwards. Broken and exhausted physically, he was hardly able to drag himself up the stairs of the pulpit; but once on his

throne, and looking down into the expectant faces of the people, he was a man of strength again and spoke his message with power. Not knowing what was before him he seemed to feel it important to gather up in this sermon all his essential teachings. He poured out his soul against the abuses and evils still prevailing in Florence, and in righteous wrath pronounced a curse on those who were guilty of polluting the favored city of God. He urged the Signory to give earnest attention to affairs of real importance and not waste their time in petty matters. In closing he said: "My people, when I stand here I am always strong; and if, when out of the pulpit, I could feel as when in it, I should always be well. But after descending these stairs I believe that my pains will return, and for this reason some time will pass before I see you again, for I must needs wait a little to recover. Then, if still living, I will again begin to preach." He told them that probably a month would elapse before he would again enter the pulpit; in the meantime Fra Dominico would preach; he was confident that the welfare of Florence would be cared for; it was God's will. "I must now conclude," said he, "for I have preached so often, and labored so hard, as to have shortened my life by many years, and am fallen very weak. Well, brother, what reward wouldst thou have? I would have martyrdom; I am content to endure it; I pray for it each day, O Lord, for love of this city."

In the sermon just referred to Savonarola appears as the fearless preacher of righteousness, the far-seeing Christian statesman, and the true pa-

triot. The reference to martyrdom indicates a new note coming into his preaching. Even now he must have seen that so far as he was personally concerned he was fighting a losing battle. No one man, however great and strong, could stand for any length of time against such opposition. Returning to the monastery he immediately wrote his reply to the papal brief. In it he declared that he had long desired to visit Rome and worship at the shrine of the apostles Peter and Paul. "But I am barely issued from a very serious malady the which hath forced me to suspend both preaching and study, and still threateneth my life. . . . Furthermore, I am bound rather to obey the benign purpose of the command than the mere words in which it is framed. Now, inasmuch as the Lord, by my means, hath saved this city from much bloodshed, and subjected it to good and holy laws, there be many adversaries, both within and without the city, who, having sought to enslave it, and having been confounded instead, now seek my blood, and have since attempted my life by steel and poison. Wherefore, I could not depart without manifest risk, nor can I even walk through the city without an armed escort. Also, this newly reformed government, that the Lord hath been pleased, by my means, to give to Florence, is not yet firmly rooted, and is visibly in danger without continued assistance; wherefore, in the judgment of all good and experienced citizens, my departure would be of great hurt to the city, while of scant profit to Rome. I can not suppose that my superior would desire the ruin of a whole city; and, therefore, trust that your holiness

will graciously accede to this delay, so that the reform begun by the Lord's will may be brought to perfection, since I am certain that it is for the good of the same that he hath now raised up these hindrances to my journey.

"And should your holiness desire greater certitude on the matters publicly foretold by me concerning the chastisement of Italy and the renovation of the Church, you will find them set forth in a book of mine that is now being made public ('Compendium Revelationum'). I was anxious to have these predictions put in print, so that, should they be not fulfilled, the world may know me to be a false prophet. But there are other things of a more hidden nature that must still remain veiled; and which I may not as yet reveal to any mortal.

"Accordingly, I beseech your holiness to graciously accept my very true and plain excuse, and to believe that it is my ardent desire to come to Rome; wherefore, as soon as possible, I shall spur myself to set forth."

Alexander made no formal reply to this letter, but he did in some way communicate the information that the apology for delay was satisfactory. In less than thirty days thereafter a most unexpected thing happened, which proved a decided shock to Savonarola and his friends. A papal brief arrived from Rome addressed to the monks of a neighboring monastery, describing Savonarola as "a certain Fra Girolamo, a seeker after novelty, and a disseminator of false doctrines." The brief commanded that the monastery of San Marco should again be reunited with the Lombard con-

gregation, and that Savonarola should refrain from every description of preaching, whether public or private; all this under pain of excommunication.

Nothing in all the correspondence between Savonarola and Alexander VI is so hard to explain as this brief. Only a few weeks before Savonarola had been addressed as a "beloved son." He is now described as "a certain Fra Girolamo." Nothing had been done since the former brief to merit the pope's displeasure. What had happened? Political reasons were undoubtedly part of the cause of the sudden and radical change in the pope's attitude. Alexander did not like the Republic of Florence, yet he did not dare openly to antagonize it. If he could crush Savonarola on other grounds than because of relations with the Republic, his end would be gained.

Savonarola immediately wrote to influential Dominicans in Rome complaining of the action of evil-minded citizens who would fain re-establish tyranny in Florence. "All these men," said he, "seek my death." In a letter to the pope, written on the 19th of September, he lamented that his enemies should have succeeded in deceiving the holy father regarding events which had occurred openly and in the presence of many witnesses. He declared his submission to the Church, and reminded the pope that the brief granting the independence of San Marco had not been secured by the application of a few friars, but at the request of all. He maintained that as he had not lapsed into error, and as he had proved the falsity of all the charges brought against him, the holy father

ought to reply to his defense and grant him absolution. "I preach," said he, "the doctrine of the holy apostles, have departed in nothing from their precepts, and am ready, if I should be in error, not only to correct myself, but to avow it publicly, and make amends before the whole people. And now again I repeat that which I have always said, that is, that I submit myself and my writings to the correction of the Holy Roman Church." Alexander accepted the defense, and in a most conciliatory brief, dated October 16th, professed his gratification that Savonarola was so willing to yield obedience to the Church and required only that he abstain from all preaching until such time as he might confer with him in Rome.

It was a piece of good fortune for Savonarola that this brief was a long while in getting to Florence. Time was given for important words to be spoken in the Duomo, words vital to the safety of the city. But when the brief did come it was obeyed. The preacher betook himself to the quiet of the monastery and there devoted his time to rest and study.

Savonarola believed with all his soul in the justice of his cause; his eyes were not blind to the scandals of Rome; and, perhaps, even as early as this, he gave serious thought to the possibility of a general church council which should declare Alexander's election null and void. Cardinal Rovere believed this ought to be done. To him Alexander was "an infidel and a heretic," who had purchased St. Peter's chair for money. He was, therefore, not a true pope. When King Charles was in Rome

eighteen cardinals waited upon him, asking him to call a general council, on the ground that Alexander had not been legally elected. Cardinal Rovere and Savonarola exchanged more than one letter on the subject.

Some rare and beautiful glimpses into these months of retirement which followed are to be seen in the personal letters of Savonarola written to members of his family. He shared all their sufferings and joys. A letter to his mother, on learning of the death of one of his brothers, is evidence of his fine feelings and his tender love for his home, and particularly for her who was the center of his human affections. But even in writing to his mother he does not forget his lofty mission or the great matters of Christian faith and practice which are upon his heart. He closes with heroic words to prepare for her the tragic end which even now casts its shadow upon him. "I would that your faith were as that of the holy Jewish woman in the Old Testament, so that you might be able, without shedding a tear, to see your children murdered before your eyes. Dearest mother, I say not this in order to comfort you; but to prepare you, lest I should have to die." Padre Marchese when shown this letter said after reading it, "Were all the writings of Fra Girolamo Savonarola perished or destroyed, this letter would be sufficient proof of the sincere and steadfast piety of his soul."

Fra Dominico was preaching the Advent sermons in the Duomo now. Strong preacher he was, too, and represented well his master's teaching. But as the carnival approached, the Arrabbiati, grown

bold because of their confidence in the favor of Rome, planned to celebrate in true Medicean style. That meant lewd songs and indecent ballads, wild revelry, drunkenness and debauch. The boys of Florence took great delight in the carnival. There was no law during carnival days. That they liked. They cajoled and pestered the people in the daytime to get money for their bonfires and feastings at night. After the bonfire, came what one of the chroniclers calls "the mad and bestial game of stones." All this had been greatly held in check, and some features stopped altogether, by the reform movement of Savonarola. But now that the reformer was under ban of the pope, the Arrabbiati would have a carnival to be remembered. The boys, and they were the same then as now, were ready and eager for any carnival the Arrabbiati might get up.

It was now that Savonarola decided upon a reform movement among the children. He well knew that it would be no easy task to break up old customs, but he had a habit always of attempting the thing he thought necessary to be done. His plan was to substitute religious gayeties for carnival gayeties. At the street corners where the boys had gathered to demand money of the passers-by, he placed small altars at which these same boys were to stand and collect money for the poor. In the old carnival days there was much singing in the streets, singing well suited to prepare the gay revelers for what was to go on under cover of night. Savonarola had too much good sense to try to stop the singing. He said to the boys, "Sing as much

as you will, but sing hymns and not immoral songs. I will write songs for you." He got Benivieni to help him. In all the streets of Florence the children sang the new songs; sang gayly and happily of the Christ Child, the *Bambino;* and with glad voices they shouted in the midst of their singing, "Gesu Christo nostro Re." In order that all might be done decently and in order, Savonarola had directed Fra Domenico to select leaders from among the boys to visit the Signory and lay their plan before the city fathers and ask for their consent.

These leaders acted as captains of companies to arrange little processions and to sing about the altars. Enthusiasm ran high. There was hardly less gayety and noise than before, but it was of a different kind. "The bestial game of stones" was stopped altogether, and three hundred ducats were collected for the poor. When the last day of the carnival came there was a great procession; not only the children but a large part of the population were in it. The children sang their hymns and shouted their "Gesu Christo." They entered the churches and sang there; then out in the street again, always singing and always shouting their "Gesu Christo." The procession ended with a visit to the "Good Men of St. Martin," to whom they handed over their carnival offering for the poor.

There is perhaps nothing in all Savonarola's mighty work in Florence which so brings us into sympathy with him as this ministry among the children. With rare tact and wisdom he carried on the work; now directing their activities in col-

lecting money for the poor; now gathering them into spacious galleries built up in the Duomo where he preached to them; and now forming them in great processions in the streets, all of them in white and all carrying little red crosses. Savonarola loved children, and from this carnival season to the close of his life he was their devoted friend, adviser, and leader. All unconsciously he was preparing the way for John Wesley and Robert Raikes.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BURNING OF THE VANITIES.

As THE preacher improved in health, his friends devoted themselves with energy to securing the recall, or at least a modification, of the papal brief. The Ten, composed entirely of Savonarola's adherents, were particularly active in writing letters to the pope and to many of the cardinals. They repeatedly urged the Florentine ambassador at Rome to use his influence to secure the pope's permission for Savonarola to return to the pulpit. "You could do nothing," they said, "that would be more grateful and welcome to all your fellow-citizens or better appreciated by the good sense of this whole population." Largely through the good offices of the Cardinal of Naples, who will be remembered as the cardinal who so shrewdly secured the brief which gave independence to San Marco, the pope finally gave consent that Savonarola should again preach. This consent was probably given with the hope that the preacher would modify his words, and tone down his criticisms of Rome. No sooner was the glad news brought to Florence, than the Signory unanimously invited Savonarola to be the preacher in the Duomo during the Lenten season then at hand.

An event now happened, which, to Savonarola, was frightfully suggestive of the degradation of

Rome. A papal commissioner, Ludovico by name, was sent to Florence to offer him a cardinal's hat. There is a story connected with the coming of this commissioner which seems to have good foundation in fact. It runs thus: The pope placed some of Savonaroia's sermons, probably the recently published "Compendium of Revelations," in the hands of a learned Dominican bishop, with the request that he pass judgment upon them. After going over them carefully, the bishop reported that the prior had said nothing which was not honest and wise. "He speaks against simony and against the corruption of the priesthood, which in truth, is very great, but he respects the dogmas and the authority of the Church; wherefore I would rather seek to make him my friend, even were it needful, by offering him the cardinal's purple."

How soon after this the papal commissioner was sent is not known, nor is it positively known just what motive Alexander had in making the offer. Perhaps he thought it wise, as the bishop suggested, to make Savonarola his friend. Was it not worth while to have such a friend? It is, of course, possible, and to many it seems probable, that the pope's motive was simply to silence the preacher. It has been whispered, even so late as our own time, that the best way to deal with a radical in the Church is to make a bishop of him. There is something about the high and holy office, so it is said, which tends to soften tone and modify teaching. Whatever may have been the pope's motive in offering the hat, it is certain that Savonarola looked upon it as bribery and barter. As such, he scorned it.

But suppose he had accepted the offer! The title of this volume would then be *"Cardinal Savonarola."* No! The book would never have been written; nor any other book telling of the life and character of the great preacher of Florence. "Come to my next sermon," said Savonarola to the papal commissioner, "and you shall have my reply." The commissioner, listening for the promised reply, heard the abuses of Rome denounced, the papal briefs pronounced invalid, the fatal malady of the Tiber vividly described, and could not fail to discover that here was a preacher who would have no red hat but one made red by his own blood. "I desire," said he, "neither hats or miters, be they great or small; I desire naught save that which Thou, O Lord, hast given Thy saints; it is death; a crimson hat, a hat of blood; that I desire."

The 17th day of February, 1496, has been well described as a memorable day in the life of Savonarola. On that day, and by the pope's permission, he stood again in the pulpit of the Duomo. After months of compulsory silence, and fresh from the disgraceful red hat affair, it is not hard to imagine what his state of mind was. Grief and indignation strove for mastery. Savonarola now saw, and clearly, too, that all his crimes against Rome were summed up in this, that he had dared to uphold political freedom and Christian virtue. But he had a conscience void of offense, and in that strength he could stand. Aye, and face the mightiest of the earth.

Great preparations had been made to take care of the crowds expected at this sermon and the ones to follow. The spacious floor of the Duomo would

not be sufficient. Everybody knew that. A great amphitheater was built up against the walls of the nave, sixteen tiers of seats in height. The Signory had spared no pains to see that order was maintained. They knew that the Arrabbiati would be there with stilettos, and hired assassins, too, sent by the Moor of Milan.

A great crowd waited for Savonarola as he came out of the San Marco gate and well-armed men formed a body-guard as he walked to the Duomo. When he stood in the pulpit he faced an audience the like of which he had never looked upon before, an excited, nervous, breathless audience. The conflicting emotions of the speaker and the highly wrought expectancy of the hearers combined to make the sermon far more impressive than one could ever guess from reading it. Never had Savonarola's eyes gleamed and flashed fire as they did that day. But when the regal power back of flashing eye gave command, there was perfect quiet and the sermon began with calm voice. The opening sentences were in the form of a dialogue. "How is it, O Friar, that thou hast tarried so long in idleness, without coming to the camp to thy soldiers' aid?—My children, I have not been in idleness; on the contrary, I come from the camp, and have been defending a stronghold, the which, had it been captured, you also might have been destroyed; but now, by God's grace and through your prayers, we have saved it. . . . Come, brother, dost thou perhaps fear to be killed?—No, my children, certainly not; for had I been afraid, I should not have come here, where I am now, in greater peril than before."

After making it clear that the question of his orthodoxy was beyond dispute he touched upon the delicate question of his relations with Rome. At this time and again in the closing sermon of the series, he said, "We are not compelled to obey all commands; when given in consequence of lying reports they are invalid; when in evident contradiction with the law of charity laid down in the Gospel, it is our duty to resist them, even as St. Paul resisted St. Peter. We are bound to presume that no such commands will be imposed on us, but in case they were imposed, we must then reply to our superior, saying, 'Thou dost err, thou art not the Roman Church, thou art a man and a sinner!'" In taking this bold position he was careful to make it plain that he did it with good reason. This is shown in the following sentence: "Were I to clearly see that my departure from a city would be the spiritual and temporal ruin of the people, I would obey no living man that commanded me to depart, for inasmuch in obeying him I should disobey the commands of the Lord; and likewise because I should presume that my superior had no intention to do evil, but had been misled by false reports." He confesses utter lack of knowledge as to the outcome of his work. "I have embarked on a stormy flood, assailed on all sides by contrary winds. I would fain reach the port, yet I can find no dock; would fain repose, yet find no resting-place; would fain remain still and silent but may not for the will of God is as a fire in my heart, which unless I give it vent, will consume the marrow of my bones. Come, O Lord, since thou dost

have me steer through these deep waters, let thy will be done."

This sermon was a forecast of the entire series, a series which commanded the most intense interest throughout. The descriptions of the corruptions and scourges were as thrilling and new as though heard for the first time. And they were new. The theme was a living one. It was related to all the life of Florence. When the preacher cried out, "Wretched Italy! I see thee stricken down; wretched people! how I see thee all oppressed," the people groaned and bowed their heads in grief. When the mortal malady of Rome was the theme, and the pride, greed, lusts, and ambition of princes and prelates were pointed out as the cause of Italy's woes, the Duomo was filled with cryings and cursings. The emotions of the people were swept as by a storm.

Now and then there were fine flashes of patriotism. Ideals of citizenship were held up which are suggestive even now. Read the following on the responsibility of suffrage: "There be many that go about the city scattering notices to the effect that this or that man should not be elected. I tell you: never obey the suggestions of these papers. If those whom you would not have elected be bad, you may openly proclaim it in council, now that there is no tyrant to oppress you. Wherefore come forth, and say frankly, 'Such an one is not fit for this office.' But if he be a good man let him be chosen." The utter unselfishness of Savonarola in his heroic work for the political reformation of Florence, is strikingly brought out in

this: "I am told there be some in the council who, when one is about to be balloted, say of him, 'Let us give him the black bean, or the white bean, because he is of this or that party;' and what is worse I am told, there be many that say, 'He is one of the Friar's men, let us give him the black beans.' (The black bean meant a favorable vote.) What, have I taught you this? I have no friend save Christ and the righteous. Act no more in this wise, for this is no purpose of mine, and you would soon cause dissensions. Let electors give their beans to those they conscientiously hold to be good and sagacious men, as I have frequently told you before."

It speaks volumes for the greatness and sublimity of Savonarola's character that, during these days when he was lashing Florence and Rome for their vices and their corruptions, he held himself so utterly aloof from narrow and party spirit. The charges brought against him by some modern critics that he lacked in magnanimity and sought to exalt his own friends at the expense of others, are so utterly without foundation that it is hardly worth while even to mention them. Nor is it worth while to stop here to answer the criticism that he ought to have interposed to save the lives of Bernardo del Nero and his fellow conspirators, who tried to deliver Florence into the hands of the tyrant Piero. They were guilty of treason. What could Savonarola do? It would be hard to find, in all the history of heroic men placed in such position as Savonarola was, a finer example of lofty ideals and unselfish patriotism.

Among the striking features of this Lenten sea-

son were the great meetings for the children. They sat in temporary seats in the Duomo. Now all the preacher's words were for them. They were exhorted to be diligent in their studies, to be kind and charitable, to have high ideals, to keep themselves pure, and to fear God. Near the close of Lent, elaborate preparations were made for another great procession. It was to take place on Palm Sunday. A tabernacle was built in the Duomo, and on it was painted a representation of Christ riding in triumph into Jerusalem. This was carried at the head of an immense procession, the boys leading, all dressed in white, with olive wreaths on their heads and red crosses or palm branches in their hands. Following the boys came the young men, then the older men, and after them many priests and friars. After these followed the girls and the women. This procession, like the former one, carried a large offering of money which had been gathered up at the street corners by busy and persistent boys. The procession wound around the Duomo, then to the Piazza Signoria, where not many months hence would be witnessed the blackest crime in the history of Florence. From there the white line of happy children moved slowly towards the spacious square in front of the church and monastery of San Marco, where the joy and gladness of Palm Sunday reached its climax. Here the large offerings of coin were turned over to the newly established Monte di Pieta, a sort of public pawnshop, recently organized by Savonarola as a savings-bank and money loaning institution for the poor. This was one of the means adopted by the

reform preacher to drive out from Florence the usurers, chiefly Jewish money-lenders, who were sapping the life blood of the city.

It is hardly too extravagant to say that in all the history of preaching it would be difficult to find an instance where the immediate effects of a series of sermons were so great. Count over your great preachers and study again the effect of their sermons upon an audience and upon a city, and when you are done Savonarola will stand out greater and grander than before. Like a true warrior of God and prophet of God, he fought and prophesied against tyranny, against corruption in high places, against every evil of the time which hindered men from being the great free beings God intended them to be. "What will be the end of this war thou art carrying on?" he soliloquized one day in the pulpit. "If thou wouldst know the general result, I tell thee it will end in victory; but if thou wouldst know what will be its result as regards myself in particular, I tell thee it will end in death and in being cut to pieces. Rest assured, however, that all this will serve to spread abroad this doctrine, the which proceedeth not from me, but from God. I am but a tool in His hands; wherefore I am resolved to fight to the death." The offer of a cardinal's hat had not softened Savonarola's tone or modified his teachings and warnings. Alexander VI was discovering, as Lorenzo the Magnificent had discovered two years before, that here was a preacher who could not be bought. He would have no red hat but one made red by his own blood, the martyr's hat.

Now it was that the great preacher of Florence

began to be the subject of frequent discussions in circles outside the limits of Italy. His published sermons were read in France, in Germany, and in England. Even the sultan had some of them translated that he might read them. Enemies as well as friends joined to make his name widely known. The most extravagant, and, in some instances, scurrilous, misrepresentations were published in letters and in pamphlets. Doggerel, too, was used to make ridiculous his utterances and bring his work into disrepute. Do not let it be supposed that all this went unchallenged. Piagnoni stoutly, and at times nobly, defended the character and teachings of their great leader. Perhaps they were not always wise, but their heart was right, and they stand out in striking contrast with the Arrabbiati.

The battle to the death was on. It was only a question of time. A consistory of fourteen Dominican theologians was asked by the pope to carefully look into the conduct and teachings of the troublesome preacher. By far the most serious charge made against him, was that he was the cause of all the misfortunes of Piero de' Medici. To the papal court this was serious. The Republic of Florence did not look at it that way. It counted in his favor that he had stood against Piero. Soon after Easter Savonarola went to Prato, where his preaching was the one topic of conversation. Learned professors of the university of Pisa, now temporarily located at Prato, and humble peasants, all heard him with equal interest. "The land of Prato," says one of the chroniclers, "seemed turned into a church."

Two books published about this time added greatly to Savonarola's strength and influence. One was "On the Simplicity of the Christian Life," the other was an "Exposition of the Seventy-ninth Psalm." These publications were quite different in character. In the first, Savonarola describes what he considers the essentials in Christian life and character. In the second, the most striking feature is the fearful arraignment of the priesthood. "It is the general practice," he says, "to be one day in the theater, and the next in the Episcopal chair; to be in the theater to-day, and to-morrow a canon in the choir; to-day a soldier, and to-morrow a priest."

In May he returned to the pulpit with the noble utterance, "I am here in obedience to Him who is the Prelate of prelates and the Pope of popes." Later he was invited by the Signory to speak in the hall of the Great Council before the magistrates and leading citizens. Never did he use more even-tempered words than on this occasion. "The clergy," said he, "wrongfully complain of me. If I have attacked vice, I have attacked no individual in particular. But still greater wrong is done me by the citizens, who go about crying that I meddle in all the business of the State. I have never intervened in your affairs; both in public and in private I have said, and now repeat in this place, that such is not my office; and even did I seek to interfere in those things, no one ought to give ear to me. What if I have suggested good laws for the well-being of the people and their liberty? What if I have checked discord and pacified men's minds?

All that hath been to the glory of God; and those men would stone me for a good work. They go about crying, 'The friar would have money, the friar hath secret intelligence, the friar would play the tyrant, the friar would have a cardinal's hat.' I tell you that had I desired such things, I should not be wearing a tattered robe at this hour."

There were months now when Florence saw many dark days. There were intrigues for the return of Piero, and Maximilian had come to take the iron crown of the empire and arbitrate or possess in Italy. The pope's army was approaching, and the war with Pisa was not going on well. A heavy blow fell in the death of one of the city's greatest men, Piero Capponi; he was killed in battle by a shot from a Pisan gun. Then famine came and the plague. The magistrates were alarmed for their city. They needed some voice to inspire hope and confidence. The one voice with such power was Savonarola's. At the command of the Signory he spoke. "Listen to my words!" and as he began to speak his old enthusiasm began to kindle, "I am willing to forfeit my robe if we do not drive away our enemies." Two days later, and a foaming charger galloped through the San Frediano Gate, to tell Florence that her ships of supplies were safely anchored in the harbor at Leghorn. The famine was ended and the power of the plague soon broken. The preacher might now continue to speak in spite of papal briefs. Once more the city sounded Savonarola's praises. Once more he was the deliverer of Florence. Once more the people declared him to be God's true prophet.

The opportunity which now came to the preacher was not allowed to go by unimproved. Reminding the people of recent reverses and sore afflictions and how they had been delivered, he earnestly exhorted them to thanksgiving to God. With new fervor he held up high ideals of government, challenged the people to political virtue and civic honesty, and urged them to hold inviolate their new liberties. Savonarola seems to have clearly understood that there was no permanent safety for the new Republic apart from the virtue and intelligence of its citizens. He constantly pleaded for unselfish action and the common good. His one great demand of the civil authorities was that they regard justice. He was forever warning against the tricks and rascalities of politicians. Justice was what he wanted. "Do justice, therefore, magnificent Signory; justice, Signory of Eight; justice, magistrates of Florence; justice, men and women; let all cry for justice!"

The Piagnoni were, for the time, the absolute masters of Florence. Savonarola's "heavenly despotism" was almost universally recognized in the city. But the might of Rome was filling the southern horizon, and, under the surface, there were plots and intrigues in Florence. Some were secretly whispering that the friar was expecting too much of weak humanity, and demanding more of the city than it could do; he was too much of a rigorist. Danger lurked on all sides and Savonarola knew it. He might have trimmed a little just now. Ah, but he could not do that. His fine Christian idealism and powerful will, ever held

him to the high standard of Christian virtue and political freedom he had so long proclaimed from the Duomo pulpit. Any but a true man would have lowered his standard.

Outwitted in the previous carnival, the Arrabbiati began early to make plans to have the carnival of 1497 all their own way. The revelries, the orgies, and all Medicean extravagances were to be revived and new features added. Never was a more vigorous and determined effort made to crucify virtue and enthrone vice. Driven to the limits of madness, the Arrabbiati were determined to break utterly the influence of the Piagnoni and put a stop to the sway of the "twist necks" and "prayer mumblers." But Savonarola and his faithful Fra Domenico were not caught napping. The boys of the city were early organized to repeat what they had done in preparation for the carnival of the year before. The altars were set up, the lauds were sung, and a decidedly new feature was added which greatly increased the enthusiasm of the boys. They were instructed to go about the city and appeal everywhere for what they were to call *Vanities*. They asked for old-time carnival masks and costumes, for indecent books and pictures; they went from house to house making their appeal, and repeating brief prayers, as the *vanities* were placed in their hands. When the great and final day of the carnival came, all thoughts of revelry and orgies were forgotten. Nothing was thought of but the great procession and what was to happen in the Piazza.

Early in the morning the people gathered in large numbers in the Duomo to celebrate mass. At

a later hour they came again. This time for the procession. All the doings of the day were to be for the glory of King Jesus. At the head of the procession was a beautiful figure of the infant Christ, the *Bambino*. Donatello's chisel had made it. What a chisel Donatello had! The people looked upon the beautiful figure with delighted wonder. One of the *Bambino's* hands was pointing to the cross, the other was raised in benediction. Close behind the image followed the boys, some thousands of them, robed in white and with red crosses. All Florence was in the procession or watching it. The boys with the alms-boxes gathered a bountiful harvest for the Good Men of St. Martin. The day reached its climax of enthusiasm in the spacious Piazza in front of the Palazzo Vecchio. There an imposing pyramid had been built up. Its circumference at the base measured two hundred and forty feet, and its height sixty feet. Seven great tiers measured the distance between base and summit, each tier standing for a mortal sin. There on the tiers and well classified, if we may accept Benivieni's statement, were the *vanities*. Gambling devices of all sorts were there, musical instruments which had been used in the revelries of former carnivals, lascivious books both in Latin and Italian, indecent pictures and pieces of sculpture, women's dresses with immodest figures on them, and gay and fantastic carnival trappings of all sorts. The apex of the pyramid was crowned with a personification of old King Carnival. It was a spectacular scene! The pyramid in the center of the Piazza! The white-

robed children arranged in front of the old Palace and the Loggia dei Lanzi! Singing their lauds and hymns in honor of King Jesus, they cried out their childish invectives against the carnival, and shouted with fine enthusiasm, *"Viva Gesu Christo, nostro Re!"* At a given signal torches lighted the pyramid at the four corners, and the mighty pile blazed and flamed in mad fury! The children shouted louder than ever! The trumpeters of the Signory sounded their trumpets; the bells from the Palace tower pealed forth notes of triumph, and all the people in the Piazza shouted with the children, shouted as they had never shouted before, "Long live Jesus Christ, King of Florence." So ended the carnival of 1497.

Did Savonarola do wisely in this? We should hardly praise the preacher-reformer who would attempt such a bonfire in New York or Chicago. But Savonarola lived in a different age and under the sunny skies of Italy. George Eliot in her Romola seems to see possible reason in it all. "Had there been bonfires in the olden times? There was to be a bonfire now, consuming impurity from off the earth. Had there been symbolic processions? There were to be processions now, but the symbols were to be white robes, and red crosses, and olive wreaths—emblems of peace and innocent gladness—and banners and images held aloft were to tell of the triumphs of goodness. . . . As for the collections from street passengers, they were to be greater than ever—not for carousing and superfluous suppers, but for the benefit of the hungry and needy." Whatever we sober people of the North,

and of the twentieth century, may think of what happened, there is no doubt but that Savonarola thought he was doing God's service. Nor is there any doubt that the vast majority of the citizens saw in the proceedings of the day, the arraignment and destruction of vice and the coronation of virtue.

One of the most beautiful illustrations of the impression made is to be found in the diary of a contemporary, Luca Landucci. In describing the apostolate of the children in gathering up the *vanities,* Landucci writes, "The children had received such encouragement from Fra Girolamo to reprove unbecoming modes of dress and the vice of gambling, that when the people said, 'Here come the prior's children,' every gambler, however bold he might be, would take himself off, and women attired and conducted themselves with all modesty. The children were held in such reverence that every one abstained from scandalous vice. Not a word on such matters was to be heard from young or old during the holy time; but it was short. The wicked have proved more powerful than the good. Brief as it was, may God be praised that I saw that holy time; and I pray that He may give us back once more that holy and chaste mode of life. That this was indeed a blessed time any one may judge who will consider the things which then were done." In closing the description Landucci says, "I have written these things because they are true, and I have seen them, and have experienced in them some consolation, and children of my own were among those blessed and modest bands." Many of the

writings of the time go to show that in the thought of the vast majority of the people the boys out in groups doing what Savonarola had commanded them, were indeed "blessed and modest bands." There were large numbers who saw in these children the guardian angels of Florence.

Much has been said in these later days of the excesses and extravagances connected with the burning of the *vanities,* and Savonarola has been branded as an iconoclast, a hater of art, a narrow-minded bigot, and a rigorist of altogether too pronounced a type. The charge that he was a hater of art, followed extravagant reports concerning the value of the art treasures actually destroyed. These reports seem to have originated in a statement of Burlamacchi, that a Venetian merchant actually offered twenty thousand crowns for the *vanities* collected. In view of some other statements of Burlamacchi who did not seem to have a genius for figures, it is not now thought that any such offer could have been made. Some real works of art were burned. At least one volume of Boccacio went up in smoke. There are intelligent and widely traveled people still living who will never shed any tears over it either. But granting that some valuable books were burned, and some real works of art, they constituted only a very small part of what was actually destroyed. The great and sole object of the bonfire was to suppress immorality, to put a stop to the kind of festivities and revelings which were corrupting the manners of Florence and debauching her people.

The attitude of Savonarola towards art and

learning is too well understood to make necessary any elaborate defense of his conduct in this instance. In a noble passage Villari has pointed out how Savonarola founded a school of design in San Marco, and how he was continually surrounded by a band of the best artists of his age. "All the world knows," says he, "the ardent affection he had inspired in Fra Bartolemeo, who for four years after his master's death was unable to resume the brush. All the della Robbia were devoted to Savonarola, two of them received the monastic robe from his hands, and the family long preserved a traditional reverence for his name. Concerning Lorenzo di Credi, Vasari tells us that 'he was a partisan of Fra Girolamo's sect,' and relates of Cronaca, that 'he had conceived so great a frenzy for Savonarola's teachings, that he could talk of nothing else;' and he says the same of Sandro Botticelli, whom he numbers among those who illustrated the prior's works with beautiful engravings. But it is enough to mention the name of Michael Angelo Buonarotti, known to be one of his most constant hearers, and who, in his old age constantly read and re-read the prior's sermons, and never forgot the potent charm of that orator's gestures and pose." If added argument be needed it may be found in the fact that at this very time Savonarola gave the credit of the monastery of San Marco and its remaining property, to the purchase of the celebrated Medicean library, when the credit of the city was utterly exhausted, thus preserving to letters and art the fine collection of Greek and Latin codices, and the almost unrivaled

treasure of miniatures, still preserved in the Laurentian library.

If there were space it would be interesting to describe here Savonarola's ideas of the beautiful. In a little work on the "Division and utility of all the Sciences," he devotes one entire portion to "An apology for the art of Poetry." He condemned, and in scathing terms, the "false race of pretended poets" who did nothing but run after the Greeks and Romans, repeating their ideas, copying their style and their meter, and even invoking the same deities. In an age when the vigorous and noble poetry of Dante was neglected and almost despised in the general craving for and delight in obscenities, the invective with which he smites "the false race of pretended poets" is hardly to be wondered at. Savonarola was a lover of the beautiful and a friend of art. No one can read his writings and come to any other conclusion. But he despised the art which encourages vice.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE POPE ISSUES EDICT OF EXCOMMUNICATION.

It is now time to turn to Alexander VI and study the methods by which he proceeded to silence the offensive preacher. He began with a nice bit of diplomacy. It was nothing less than a secret offer, that if the Florentines would break with France (he meant break with Savonarola) and join the Holy League, he would guarantee that Pisa should be returned to them. The Ten immediately sent a special envoy to Rome to confer with the pope and report. After the conference the envoy reported that the holy father was much displeased over what the French had done. "May God pardon the author of that expedition," this the pope said to the envoy, "which has been the cause of all the woes of Italy, as your State, having been dismembered by the loss of Pisa, must be well aware. It would be worse still if the French came again. Wherefore, we are using our best efforts, as our Lord God knows, to weld the whole of Italy into one body. To effect this we count chiefly on your sagacious wits. After great difficulty we have induced the league to bestow Pisa on you, but only on condition that you join with us, and act as good Italians, by leaving the French in France. For this we must have stronger guarantee

than mere words." Making reply, the envoy assured the pope that the word of Florence was as good as their writing, and that notwithstanding their alliance with the French, they were nevertheless good and true Italians, and regarded the interests of their country. At this point he was interrupted by the pope who roughly exclaimed: "Mr. Secretary, you are as fat as ourself, but pardon me, you have come on a lean mission, and if you have naught else to say to me you may go back at once to your post." After adding that the Florentines would be driven by force to what they would not do of their own accord, and would repent when it was too late, he lost all self-control and cried: "We well know that all this comes of your faith in the prophecies of that parable-monger of yours, and allowing him to lacerate us, insult us, threaten us, and trample upon us, who though unworthy, now occupy the chair of St. Peter." It was all in vain that the envoy tried to explain that the pope had evidently been misinformed and that Savonarola was actually a good and honest man. "He continued," so runs the tale of Gherardi, "to ride the high horse, declaring that the league would do this and say that." In reporting the matter to Florence, the envoy closed by saying, "The rage against Savonarola is increasing on all sides in Rome, so that it is no more possible to say a word in his defense. And we must be on our guard against the intrigues of Piero de' Medici, who will certainly profit by the present serious aspect of affairs, which is decidedly favorable to him."

The warning against the intrigues of Piero

came none too soon. The party of the Medici in Florence saw an opportunity for coming into power, and secured the election of Bernardo del Nero as Gonfaloniere. This great and unexpected victory was made possible through the violent struggle which had been going on between the Arrabbiati and the Piagnoni. The news of the election was not long in getting to Piero, who, after the failure of the expedition of the previous year, had gone to Rome apparently a ruined man, hopeless and almost penniless. Utterly discouraged he gave himself over to a life of debauch. He consumed his time and strength in gluttony, gambling, lewdness, and every description of unnatural vice. But the possibility of again coming into power roused him in the midst of his debaucheries, and he immediately hastened to collect men and arms to march upon Florence.

The story of the expedition is hardly worth telling. Within less than thirty days, Piero was camped outside the gates of Florence with an army of one thousand three hundred men. When the general alarm and excitement was at its highest, a representative of the Signory sent a messenger to Savonarola to ask what the outcome would be. The answer was, "O ye of little faith, wherefore do you doubt? Go tell the Signory that Piero de' Medici will ride up to the gates, and ride off again without obtaining any success." This is exactly what happened. The adherents of the Medici within Florence were so amazed at the uprising of the people against the return of Piero that they saw no way but to join with them in defending the city

against the tyrant. It did not take Piero long to see that the promised uprising in his favor was not to take place. He waited under the walls of Florence just one day, and before sunrise on the following day, he and his army by quick marching were safely beyond the Sienese border. A more humiliating expedition was never undertaken.

Now that the Medici party was repudiated, the Arrabbiati came into power. The new Signory was composed almost entirely of this party. The one aim of the Arrabbiati was to crush Savonarola and his "prayer mumblers." In this they were assured of the support of Ludovico of Milan; the pope, too, had promised help. Now it was that Dolfo Spini, leader of the Compagnacci, saw his chance. He and his turbulent band devoted their days and nights to concocting plans to bring the preacher and his Piagnoni into disrepute. Insulting placards were fastened on the walls of San Marco and the monks were jeered at in the streets. The services in the church and monastery were disturbed, and a most disgraceful occurrence took place in the Duomo. It was on Ascension day. A scheme had been devised by the brutal Dolfo Spini and his ruffians to kill Savonarola while preaching. The plan was to blow up the pulpit with fireworks while the sermon was going on. This was finally given up on account of the probable loss of life among the people assembled and the reaction which might set in against them as the authors of the deed. This plan abandoned, they proceeded to defile the pulpit. They placed pointed nails, lightly covered, on the parts of the pulpit where they

would pierce the preacher's hands when he became emphatic in his discourse. They smeared the steps of the pulpit with unmentionable filth, and over the front of the pulpit they hung an ass's hide. What they hoped for from this was to provoke a riot.

The Piagnoni, now constantly on the alert, discovered what had been done and cleared away all traces of the defilement long before the hour for the sermon. The excitement was intense. Many went to San Marco to beg Savonarola not to risk his life by attempting to preach that day. His reply was one of noble indignation. "No fear of man shall induce me to deprive the people of their sermon on the day appointed by the Lord to His disciples for going to spread His doctrine throughout the world." The only thing the friends of the preacher could do now was to prepare for his defense in case of disturbance. This they did in good earnest.

At the hour for the sermon, Savonarola entered the pulpit. The Compagnacci were in the congregation, but well back by themselves. Gayly dressed and perfumed they smiled with insolent derision at the plainly dressed Piagnoni, who watched the preacher with eager faces as he began his sermon. The Compagnacci were there to scoff and disturb. The Piagnoni were there to pray—and do whatever else was necessary.

The subject of the discourse was "The Power of Faith." After discussing faith in general and showing how it could overcome every obstacle, he addressed himself especially to the faithful, telling

them that they lost heart too easily and were sad when they ought to rejoice. In speaking to the wicked, he prayed that God might not be angry with them, but forgive them and convert them. He warned them that they were not making war on him, but on the Lord. Right in the midst of this appeal a tremendous crash was heard, the doors were flung open, and amidst great confusion large numbers of people fled from the building. A rush was made for the pulpit, but devoted friends gathered about the preacher, some with arms, to defend him. They were none too soon. Savonarola tried to go on with the sermon, but finding it impossible, he knelt in prayer and waited for the tumult to cease. Later he was escorted back to the monastery by faithful and devoted friends, some of whom brandished swords, others waved crosses, and all shouted, "Long live King Jesus." The sermon was finished in the convent garden, where Savonarola encouraged his friends with the assurance that his enemies would fall in the pit they had dug for others, and that they were undermining the foundations of a wall that would crush them.

The news of this Ascension-day occurrence spread far and near. No one seemed quite sure whereunto it would lead. The Arrabbiati were clearly coming into the ascendency. It was significant that no one implicated in the disturbance in the Duomo was punished. Many of the people there present were questioned, but nothing was done except to forbid the preaching of all monks. On the 20th of May a *Pratica* was held at which it was attempted to bring about the banishment of

Savonarola. This, it was soon found, could not be done. Even the Arrabbiati realized that there were limits beyond which they could not go. The people would not suffer the banishment of their leader. The one man who seemed perfectly calm during these trying days was Savonarola. Not deeming it wise to attempt to preach, for fear of further disturbance, he took up the pen with the purpose of expressing in type what he could not say by word of mouth. "Be not troubled," he said in an open letter to God's chosen and faithful Christians, "but rather rejoice in persecutions." He assured his followers that the present tribulations, despite the will of those who had provoked them, would serve to diffuse the pure light of the Gospel. The Arrabbiati seized every opportunity to bring Savonarola into their power. They wrote frequent letters to the pope, urging him that the time had come when they could deliver his enemy, and their enemy, into his hands. The Arrabbiati hoped, and the Piagnoni feared, that the edict of excommunication might arrive at any moment.

Two days after the *Pratica* Savonarola, undoubtedly foreseeing what might come from Rome, addressed to the pope a dignified but conciliatory letter. In it he inquired why it was that the holy father had given so ready an ear to false charges brought against him by his enemies, and had refused to listen to him; he bitterly complained of the shameless language of Fra Mariano, and again declared his submission to the authority of the Church. He assured the pope that he had preached no doctrine save that of the fathers, as would speedily

appear in a work he was about to publish, "The Triumph of the Cross." In concluding the letter, he said that if all human help failed him, he would put his trust in God, and make manifest to all the world the iniquity of those who might perhaps be driven to repent the work they had in hand.

There is good reason for believing that the pope was much impressed by the matter and tone of this letter, but it reached him too late. Nine days before he had sealed and forwarded the edict of excommunication. It was only by accident that Savonarola did not receive it before the date of his own letter. The pope's edict was intrusted to the care of one Vittoni da Camerino, who, after proceeding as far as Siena, became alarmed lest he should be torn in pieces by the Piagnoni when he arrived in Florence, delivered the edict over to other hands and returned to Rome. It was near the end of May before the bad business of carrying the edict from Rome to Florence had been accomplished.

The form of the instrument may have had something to do with the difficulty in getting it to its destination. It was not addressed in the usual form, to all the faithful, but to the monks and churches of certain monasteries. This edict, which marked the beginning of the end for Savonarola, was as follows: "We have heard from many persons worthy of belief that a certain Fra Girolamo Savonarola, at this present said to be Vicar of San Marco in Florence, hath disseminated pernicious doctrines to the scandal and great grief of simple souls. We have already commanded him, by his

vows of holy obedience, to suspend his sermons, and come to us to seek pardon for his errors; but he refused to obey, and alleged various excuses, which we too graciously accepted, hoping to convert him by our clemency. But, on the contrary, he persisted still more in this obstinacy; wherefore by a second brief (7th of November, 1496) we commanded him, under pain of excommunication, to unite the convent of San Marco to the Tusco-Roman congregation recently created by us. But even then he still persisted in his stubbornness, thus *ipso facto,* incurring censure. Therefore, we now command ye, on all festivals, and in the presence of the people to declare the said Fra Girolamo excommunicate, and to be held as such by all men, for his failure to obey our apostolic admonitions and commands. And, under pain of the same penalty, all are forbidden to assist him, hold intercourse with him, or approve him either by word or by deed, inasmuch as he is an excommunicated person, and suspected of heresy.—Given in Rome this 13th day of May, 1497."

It will be observed that the one sin of which Savonarola was guilty was disobedience. He was not pronounced a heretic, but only described as "suspected of heresy." But he was disobedient. This was the pope's charge against him. And it is worthy of remark just here that modern Roman Catholic writers agree in this, that Savonarola's one crime was that of disobedience. For the people of Florence, however, the edict was an edict. It was excommunication. The Arrabbiati were jubilant. They had broken the power of

their accuser and could now do as they pleased. The Piagnoni were crushed by the sorrow which had come upon them. Many of the noblest citizens sent quick protest to Rome. General and special envoys pleaded the cause of the silenced preacher to the pope and to the cardinals. The Florentines were given to understand that the pope's hatred for Savonarola was because he had kept Florence in alliance with the French and thus defeated the purpose to make the Holy League all powerful in Northern Italy.

It was the 18th of June before the excommunication was finally published in Florence. More than a month had elapsed since it was sealed with the Fisherman's Seal. It was read at last, with elaborate ceremony and great solemnity, in the churches of Santa Croce, Santa Maria Novella, Santo Spirito, the Annunziata, and the Badia. These were the churches to which the edict was addressed. It was read by torch-light, read impressively, and in the presence of the friars. Small bells were tolled, and at the reading of the last word the torches were all extinguished and the friars were left in total darkness. The effect was immediate. The insolence and ruffianism of Dolfo Spini and his crowd now broke forth in new devices of slander and indecency. Immoral practices, we are told, returned as if by magic. The churches were deserted, the taverns were filled; women resumed the immodest mode of dress and the jewels they had discarded, and again paraded the streets attired in dazzling luxury. Scented gallants again sang indecent songs under the windows of their

mistresses. In less than a month Florence seemed to have gone back to the carnival days of Lorenzo; all thoughts of patriotism and freedom were forgotten. Such were the first results of the edict of excommunication.

But there was a deep undercurrent of sentiment in favor of Savonarola, and a spirit of patriotism which bitterly resented a papal interdict with a political motive back of it. Within less than ten days after the proclamation of the edict, a new Signory was elected favorable to the man under ban. On the 5th of July Savonarola called a meeting of all the leading citizens of Florence to ask their advice as to what ought to be done. It seemed to be almost the universal opinion of the meeting, that the question at issue was not religious but political, and that the edict was a direct blow at the liberties of the people.

Almost immediately after this meeting the Signory forwarded a letter to the pope which read as follows: "Most holy father, we are deeply afflicted to have incurred the ban of the Church, not only because of the respect always entertained by our Republic for the holy keys, but because we see that a most innocent man has been wrongfully and maliciously accused to your holiness. We deem this friar to be a good and pious man, thoroughly versed in the Christian faith. He has labored many years for the welfare of the people, and no fault has ever been detected either in his life or his doctrine. But as virtue is never free from the attacks of envy, so there be many of our people who invert the name of honesty, and think to rise to great-

ness by attacking the good. Wherefore, we fervently implore your holiness, in your paternal and divine charity, to use your own judgment in this matter, and remove the weight of your ban, not only from Father Girolamo Savonarola, but from all those who have incurred it. Your holiness could do no better kindness to the Republic, especially in this time of pestilence in which bans are of grave peril to men's souls." It is clear from the matter and tone of this letter, that the government of Florence was determined to stand by the preacher. The members of this Signory, and all their successors for the remainder of the year, were of one mind. They were friendly to Savonarola and they were determined to induce the pope to withdraw the edict.

A curious thing happened just now. The Cardinal of Siena, who afterwards became Pope Pius III, sent word to Savonarola that if five thousand crowns were paid to a troublesome creditor of his, whom he named, he would undertake the recall of the edict. As money could purchase almost anything in the court of Alexander, the cardinal would probably have been able to accomplish what he promised. "I should deem myself far more deeply banned," said Savonarola, "were I to accept absolution at such a price."

Close upon this incident a tragedy occurred in Rome, so atrocious that even the Italy of the fifteenth century was stirred with horror. On the night of June 14, the pope's eldest son, the Duke of Candia, was killed by a dagger thrust, and his body thrown into the Tiber. The murderer was

the duke's own brother, Cesare Borgia, Cardinal of Valencia. Alexander was plunged into agonies of grief. One of the dispatches of the Venetian ambassador declares: "The wild wail of the bereaved old man in the castle of St. Angelo was heard in the streets around." For four days he saw no one, and would neither eat nor drink. Following the terrible grief came remorse. Six cardinals were appointed to reform the Church. When the news of this tragedy and the pope's mourning reached Florence, Savonarola immediately addressed a letter of condolence to the afflicted pontiff. He urged the power and value of faith as a source of strength in adversity. He reminded the pope that he himself was suffering, suffering for the sake of a work for which he desired help. Savonarola protested that he wrote in all humility, and under the promptings of charity; that he desired that his Holiness might find the consolation of God in his tribulation.

It was an unusual thing that an excommunicated friar should thus write to the pope who had excommunicated him. Evidence is not wanting that the letter was received in good part. But alas for Savonarola and the commission intrusted to the six cardinals! The pope soon forgot his grief and was again mastered by his inordinate ambition and love of display. He felt compelled, however, to move cautiously in the case of Savonarola, and for several reasons. The Signory was friendly to the preacher, many influential persons had urged clemency in the case of the excommunicated man, the fearful ravages of the plague in Florence made it

impolitic to be too drastic in the measures adopted to enforce the edict, and, besides, leading citizens of Florence had been discovered to be implicated in the plot for the return of Piero. Among them was the aged and highly respected Bernardo del Nero. Whatever else was brought to the pope's attention bearing upon the case of Savonarola, he received frequent letters from members of the Signory. They were persistent and determined in their appeals for the absolution of the great preacher. "It is our desire," so the Signory wrote to their envoy, "that you should knock at every door, shout aloud and make every possible effort, and neither cease nor spare your labors, until this purpose has been achieved."

The plague was now on in Florence. Savonarola was shut up in his convent ministering to the sick, writing letters to friends, publishing small tractates, and finishing his monumental work on "The Triumph of the Cross." This work, perhaps more than any other of his writings, completely vindicates him as a preacher of sound doctrine. The primary object of the book was to show that the teachings of the Gospel and man's reason are in entire accord. The method used was new in the fifteenth century. The treatise is divided into four books. In the first, the author discusses the existence and attributes of God. In the second, he shows the truth and excellence of the Christian religion which he maintains is above reason, but not contrary to it. In the third, he takes up such great doctrinal subjects as the incarnation, original sin, the passion of Christ, Christian morals and the

sacraments, and shows that they can not be objected to from the standpoint of reason. In the fourth and last book, he confutes all other creeds, doctrines and religions, and proves them to be utterly false when compared with Christianity. The Christian religion, he concludes, is the one true religion. The following passages are selected from the epilogue: "Now, if Jesus Christ has done all these things without miracles, it is the greatest of all miracles; and if He has accomplished them by miracles this religion is Divine." "Appointed by God, preserved through so many centuries, maintained in spite of persecution, sealed by the blood of martyrs; yes, that faith is Divine! If then, we have not lost all our understanding, we must believe that the faith of Jesus Christ is the true faith."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STRUGGLE WITH ROME GOES ON.

Events now crowded together in quick succession. The pope demanded, the Signory politely refused; the pope showed signs of relenting; the Signory urged again the recall of the edict; the pope was furious with rage, the Signory confessed themselves his obedient subjects. So the struggle for the body of Savonarola went on, and for weary months.

The Arrabbiati resorted to every method they could think of to silence the voice which had spoken out against the scandalous impurity of their lives and the base treachery of their political schemes. The Piagnoni kept on declaring the virtues and achievements of their great leader, sent frequent letters and petitions to friends in Rome to defeat the black purposes of the Arrabbiati and the Bigi, and were ever on the alert to discover the wicked plots of enemies of the new constitution and of the new liberties of the citizens. Savonarola was ever calm and confident. Conscious of personal integrity and of the truth of his teachings, believing that in some way the "spreading wings" would yet be broken and the Church regenerated, he stands out in a solitary grandeur all his own.

From May until late December there had been six months of silence. The voice of the preacher

had not been heard in the Duomo or in San Marco. During these months the pen had been Savonarola's only method of defense. That this was so is perhaps fortunate for the Reformer's fame. It was the pen, writing what the voice could never have spoken, which has given us clear and convincing argument why the edict of excommunication ought to be regarded as invalid, and why it was necessary for a preaching friar, conscious of the truth of the words he had spoken, to stand out, and to the death, against the commands of a corrupt pope who had not only bought the privilege of sitting in St. Peter's chair, but had smeared and polluted all the holy vestments of papal authority. In this position he was ably supported by the learned Pico della Mirandola, who maintained in a forceful open letter that excommunication derives its force from justice, and without justice can take no effect. It was in these months, when he was under the ban of Alexander Borgia, that Savonarola built up an enduring memorial of his innocence and fame in writing the "Triumph of the Cross."

The time came when the preacher could no longer keep silent. But it was a bold thing to speak when the pope had commanded silence. How could Savonarola justify himself? In this way. He saw that immorality was increasing, that the Republic was in danger, and that a voice of warning was needed. This was enough. On Christmas-day he publicly administered the mass three times in the Church of San Marco, and then led his brother monks in solemn procession around the

Piazza in front of the monastery. This courageous act so impressed the Signory that they gave permission for him to preach in the Duomo. In anticipation of the immense crowd which would come, temporary galleries were again put up. The archbishop's vicar, alarmed at what was about to take place, forbade all monks and priests from hearing the sermon, and commanded the parish priests to threaten their flocks with loss of all the sacraments and unconsecrated burial in case they went to hear the excommunicated prior. The Signory made short work of this little vicar. They notified him that unless he withdrew his mandates he would be proclaimed a rebel. This only increased the interest in the promised sermon. When Sunday came the Duomo was crowded.

Who can divine the feelings of Savonarola as he ascended once more this throne? Under the protection of the power of the government he was there to defy the power of the Church. The ecclesiastical arm had been raised to strike him down. The secular arm was now raised in his defense. The theme of the sermon comprised the excommunication, the authority of the pope, and the right of every honest conscience to resist unjust commands. In beginning the sermon he prayed this prayer: "I beseech thee, O Lord, to let no word pass my lips that may be opposed to the Holy Scriptures or the Church." Then, with words that burned, he proceeded to defend his action in defying the edict of excommunication. "The righteous prince or the good priest," said he, "is merely an instrument in the Lord's hands for the government

of the people. But when the higher Agency is withdrawn from prince or priest he is no longer an instrument, but a broken tool." In attempting to show how it may be determined whether the higher Agency be present or absent, he maintained that if the laws and commands be contrary to that which is the root and principle of all wisdom, namely, of Godly living and charity, it may be taken for granted that the prince or priest is a "broken tool," and that men are in no wise bound to obey him. This test he applied to the edict of excommunication and showed how it opened the way for the return of drunkenness, profligacy, and every other crime; and how righteous living had been struck down. "Therefore on him that giveth commands opposed to charity, which is the plenitude of our law, *anathema sit.* Were such command pronounced by an angel, even by the Virgin Mary herself and all the saints (the which is certainly impossible), *anathema sit.* If pronounced by any law, or canon, or command, *anathema sit.* And if any pope hath ever spoken to a contrary effect from this, let him be declared excommunicate. I say not that such pope hath ever existed; but if he hath existed he can have been no instrument of the Lord, but a broken tool." In closing the sermon Savonarola said that, if necessary, his work would be attended by some open and mighty miracle.

On the two following Sundays he continued the discussion. Openly and defiantly he now stood squarely against the pope and defied his edict. He still believed in ecclesiastical authority, but he

rebelled against the unworthy exercise of ecclesiastical authority by a man notoriously bad in character and bad in purpose. The godless decrees of a godless pope no true believer was bound to respect. So he maintained. The position of Savonarola at this point was thoroughly Protestant. The Catholic view of the case is different. It has been well put by Dr. Pastor, who says, "According to the teaching of the Church, an evil life can not deprive the pope or any other ecclesiastical authority of his lawful jurisdiction." This same author maintains that Savonarola "was bound to obey the Holy See, however it might be desecrated by such an occupant as Alexander VI."

The interest in these sermons can hardly be imagined, much less described. There was something almost tragic about it. The multitudes in the Duomo were in sympathy with the preacher, because they believed in him, and gloried in what he had done for Florence; but to break with the pope, to defy the great head of the Church—this they were hardly ready for. There was something about it they could not quite understand. They experienced a sense of uneasiness and were in doubt. Savonarola himself could not fail to see that with all the enthusiasm of the great crowds, he failed to receive just that hearty support and absolute loyalty which had heretofore been given so ungrudgingly.

In the closing sermon of this series Savonarola announced to an audience which could hardly believe their ears when they heard him, that on the last day of the carnival, after saying mass in the

Church of San Marco, he would go out in front of the monastery and there make a challenge to heaven, which would prove the truth and sincerity of his course of action. "When I shall take the sacrament in my hands," the audience listened breathlessly as he spoke, "let every one earnestly pray that if this work proceeds not from the Lord, He may send upon me fire from heaven which shall then and there draw me down to hell." The news of the proposed challenge spread like wild-fire throughout the city and when the day came the Piazza of San Marco was crowded. Standing room in every part of the Piazza, and in the streets leading into it, was at a premium. The surrounding buildings were crowded. All eyes were turned toward the wooden pulpit which had been set up on a raised platform just out from the door of the monastery. Friars were gathered about the platform chanting their Psalms.

George Eliot in her *Romola* has wonderfully described this scene. Savonarola, as though coming into the holy place of God's presence, ascended the pulpit and bowed in prayer, then solemnly addressed the audience, calling upon them to join in the prayer he had asked them to offer. Holding aloft the consecrated host, his clear voice rang out in this startling challenge to the Almighty. "O Lord, if my deeds be not sincere, if my words come not from Thee, strike me in this moment with Thy thunder!" The people waited; dazed, breathless, expectant! But no flash came from out the heavens. No thunder was heard. The beam of light, which George Eliot makes so much of, was undoubtedly

the Divine ecstacy which the people saw in the preacher's face as he turned to go back to the monastery. This was the greatest triumph, so it seemed to those who were there present, in all the public life of Savonarola. It does not seem so to us. He showed here as he showed later, in the ordeal of fire, how difficult it is for a truly great man to altogether break away from the age in which he lives.

On the afternoon of this day there was another great carnival procession and another burning of *vanities,* the pyramid higher and more imposing than before. The outward triumph of this last carnival which Savonarola ever saw, was certainly all that he and the Piagnoni could have wished. True, the Compagnacci were insulting and did everything they could to interrupt the procession. But the Piagnoni had their way, and the program they had arranged was carried out in every particular.

The sermons which Savonarola preached in the Duomo while under excommunication were all printed and immediately distributed in Florence and throughout Italy. They went by swift messenger to the pope, who was more furious than ever. He immediately threatened the whole city of Florence with interdict if the Signory did not put a stop to the sermons. Savonarola was described in this brief as "the son of perdition." Another brief was sent to the canons of the Duomo, ordering them to prevent Savonarola from again entering their building. In the last sermon which he preached in the Duomo Savonarola said: "They call me 'the

son of perdition.' Let this be sent back for answer: 'The man whom you thus designate has neither harlots nor concubines, but gives himself up to preaching the faith of Christ. His spiritual children, those who listen to his doctrine, do not pass their time in the commission of crime; they live virtuously. This people labors to exalt the Church, and you to destroy it.'" The menaces and threats of Rome had no terror for the aroused Puritanism in Savonarola. Again he held up the corruptions of Rome to the public gaze; again he described the woes of his beloved Italy; again he proclaimed a mighty regeneration of the Church and the triumph of the Gospel. "I will thunder in their ears," and the preacher's voice sounded like thunder to those who heard him, "I will thunder in their ears after such a fashion that they will hear indeed. The time draws near to open the casket, and if we but turn the key there will come forth such a stench from the Roman sink that it will spread through all Christendom, and every one will perceive it."

It seems to be commonly understood that this announcement that he might "turn the key," was a hint of his purpose to call a general church council which would depose Alexander and take measures to reform the Church. But after Alexander had branded him as "the son of perdition," and threatened interdict for Florence in case he continued to preach, there was little more that Savonarola could do. He did preach a few sermons in San Marco and then said farewell to the pulpit. He had preached for eight years since coming out of

the rose-scented garden where he had been lecturing to monks and citizens. The prophecy then was fulfilled and Savonarola's preaching was done.

There was nothing left now but to "turn the key." But it was too late to do that effectively. Alexander, it is true, was increasingly unpopular, his scandalous life more and more notorious, his avarice more unblushing than ever; but with the return of Charles to France the time had passed for the calling of a Church council. No one knew this better than the shrewd cardinals who had waited upon him in Rome. Savonarola, however, was not a politician. He only knew that his cause was just and that it ought to prevail. That was enough for him. His plan involved the co-operation of the sovereigns of France, Spain, Germany, England, and Hungary in calling a council of the whole Church. The formal letter, addressed to each of these princes, began thus: "The Church is steeped in shame and crime from head to foot. You, instead of exerting yourself to deliver her, bow down before the source of all this evil. Therefore, the Lord is angry and hath left the Church for so long without a shepherd. I assure you, in the word of the Lord, that this Alexander is no pope at all, and should not be accounted as such; for, besides having attained to the chair of St. Peter by the shameless sin of simony, and still daily selling benefices to the highest bidder,—besides his other vices which are known to all the world, I affirm also that he is not a Christian, and does not believe in the existence of God, which is the deepest depth of unbelief." These princes were enjoined

to convoke a council as speedily as possible in some neutral place, and they were given the assurance that God would favor their work. Before sending the formal letter to these princes, communication was opened with the Florentine envoys at their respective courts. One of the letters thus sent was intercepted by spies of the Duke of Milan. From the duke the letter went quickly to Alexander. If Alexander's rage could have been fiercer than it was before, it would have been so now. Should these princes respond favorably, Alexander's life would be in danger; but with this letter in his hands, bursting with rage though he was, he well knew what would be the outcome in Florence.

The most pathetically tragic of all the experiences of Savonarola thus far must now be recorded —the ordeal of fire. It ought never to have happened, and would not if Savonarola had shown the poise and independence in this situation he had shown in others. He was pressed into it against his own reason and judgment. Influenced by the sentiment of the age in which he lived, and relying on the testimony and judgment of brother monks, he was led to do what he knew was out of harmony with his teachings and with his profound convictions.

The way it happened was this. The Franciscan monks of Santa Croce, envious of the fame which had come to the Dominicans through Savonarola's powerful leadership in Florence, now naturally took the side of the pope with greater vehemence and energy than ever. One of the number, Fra Francesco de Puglia, who was preaching the Lenten

sermons in Santa Croce, declared his readiness to enter a burning fire "along with the adversary," to test the validity of the excommunication and the error of Savonarola's prophetic pretentions. The challenge was quickly accepted by Fra Domenico, who declared himself ready to prove by the fiery ordeal the following conclusions: namely, that the Church was in need of reform and would be chastised first and then restored; that Florence also would be chastised, and afterwards restored to flourish anew; that infidels would be converted to Christianity; that these things would come to pass in that very age; and that the excommunication pronounced against Fra Girolamo Savonarola was invalid and might be disregarded without sin. Savonarola at once tried to refrain Domenico, who pleaded with tears for the privilege of the high honor of thus openly proving to the world the truth of his master's teachings. Fra Silvestro now came forward with the story of a vision in which he had seen Fra Domenico guarded by angels and coming out of the fire unhurt. What was most embarrassing for Savonarola was that the Signory formally gave their sanction to the proposed ordeal and proceeded to arrange the terms and conditions under which it should take place. Reluctantly Savonarola yielded.

Florence was eager for the day of the ordeal to come, and was bitterly disappointed that it was once postponed. What could be more dramatically exciting than to see two monks walk into the flame to prove which was right, the pope or Savonarola. If Domenico should burn that would settle it that

the excommunication was valid. If Francesco should fall in the flames it would be good proof that Savonarola was a true prophet. The solemn decision of the Signory was that if the Dominican champion should perish Savonarola must leave the city, or if the Franciscan champion should burn, then Fra Francesco must go. Should both champions, however, succumb to the flames, the sentence of banishment was to fall on the Dominicans alone; and if one or the other of them refused to enter the fire, he and his party should suffer the penalty.

Not a friar in San Marco but would have been glad to take Domenico's place. On all sides they offered themselves: "Behold me! behold me! I am ready to go into the fire for the glory of the Lord." The whole matter of the ordeal had been fully reported to the pope, who knew all the details of the plan and that the day had been set for the event. Some there were who believed and hoped that Alexander, as soon as he heard of it, would promptly forbid the ordeal's taking place, but he did not do it. Perhaps he saw, as the Arrabbiati did, that in any case the ordeal would end in humiliation for Savonarola.

The day finally fixed upon for the fire test was the 7th of April. A great platform was erected in the Piazza in front of the old Palace. It was sixty yards long and ten yards wide, and on it were two rows of fagots well saturated with pitch and oil, between which the pious champions were to walk. It was agreed that the fagots should be lighted at one end of the platform and that the

friars enter at the other, and that, after they had entered, the fagots should be lighted behind them. To make sure that all this be done decently and in order, the Magnificent Signory had provided that all openings to the Piazza should be guarded by soldiers; extra troops were also in reserve in front of the Palace. Each party, too, had armed men of its own. Three hundred Piagnoni were drawn up under Salviati to protect Savonarola and the friars of San Marco. Dolfo Spiri was there with a band of five hundred Compagnacci to guard the rights of the Franciscans.

Before leaving San Marco Savonarola had celebrated the mass and said to his brother monks "I can not be certain that the ordeal will take place, for that does not depend on us; but I am able to tell you that if it does take place the victory will certainly be ours." In this hesitation we see Savonarola's better and nobler self struggling against the self which was the product of the age that gave him birth. "Are you willing to serve God, O my people?" When every one answered, "Yes," there seemed nothing for him to do but go with the defender of his honor to the Piazza Signoria.

The Loggia dei Lanzi, where stands the noble statue of Judith and Holophernes, had been set apart for the representatives of the contesting parties. The Franciscans were given the half next the Palace, the Dominicans were assigned the farthest side. The Franciscans had come early. The bell in the great tower was striking twelve, so it is said, when the Dominicans approached, singing that great psalm so often sung nearly two cen-

turies later by Cromwell and his armies as they marched to battle: "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered." Voices in the crowd took up the refrain with such strength and fervor that, to the Piagnoni, it seemed as if the earth trembled in sympathy with their great cause. Fra Domenico, walking as though going to his coronation, wore a red cope and held a cross in his hand. Savonarola, dressed in the white robes of a priest, carried before him the sacrament. When he entered the Loggia and faced the immense throng of people, all doubt seemed to have vanished; he stood there with serene countenance to await the vindication which a righteous God was about to show.

Fra Rondinelli, who had been appointed to take the place of Fra Francesco as the representative of the Franciscans, had not yet appeared. He was inside the Palace consulting with the Signory and entering objections. Rondinelli never believed he would come out of the fire alive. He was therefore slow about entering it. First, he would not have Domenico go into the fire with the red cope. That settled, he objected to Domenico's vestments; they were possibly enchanted so that the fire would not touch them. Here Savonarola protested, but finally yielded; and Domenico was conducted into the Palace to exchange clothes with Allessandro Strozzi. It was a glad moment for Fra Allessandro, for he thought that he, instead of Domenico, was to have the high honor of facing the flames. With the joy of a true Christian martyr he threw himself at the feet of Savonarola for his blessing.

The crowd, not understanding the cause of the

delay, became restless, and there were cries for Savonarola to end the matter by going into the fire himself. Could he not do it? Was he not a prophet? Would not God speak to the flames and command them not to touch him? Disorder near the rows of fagots led the Compagnacci to rush toward the Loggia. Salviati promptly met them, and drawing a line on the ground at a good distance from the Loggia, threatened death to the first man who crossed it. Rondinelli had not yet shown himself. The crowd murmured and grew more impatient. A thunder storm suddenly broke over the city and the rain fell in torrents. But not a man left the Piazza. The crowd had come for a miracle! And a miracle they would have! Now Rondinelli objected to Domenico's crucifix. He would take the host then. "Horrors!" cried the Franciscans. There was constant coming and going between the Palace and the Loggia, but nothing done. Night was coming on, and the crowd was getting ugly. Finally the Signory commanded that the ordeal stand suspended and that both parties return to their monasteries. The monks were ready. On both sides they had had enough of the bad business. Not so the crowd. Where was the miracle? They had sniffed no smell of scorching flesh! It was Savonarola whose honor was at stake! Why had he not walked between the fagots? Surely if he were God's prophet he could have done it!

The spell was broken. No one knew it better than Savonarola. It was a Via Dolorosa indeed along which he carried his heavy heart as he re-

turned to San Marco. And how the crowd hooted at him and derided him as he entered the convent gate! The agonies in the prior's cell in San Marco that night must have had something of Gethsemane's burden in them. There were other burdens, too. We may well believe that ere morning the greater Savonarola had triumphed, the Savonarola which was so much larger than the age in which he lived.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRAGIC END.

THERE are but four things to tell of now,—the arrest, the mock trial, the thirty days of solitary confinement in the little cell in the top of Arnolfo's tower, and the death in the Piazza.

Before entering his cell, after returning from the humiliating ordeal in front of the old Palace, Savonarola went at once into the convent church where Piagnoni women had waited all day in prayer. Entering the pulpit, he told them of all that had happened during the day, and counseled them to live godly lives; then dismissed them with his blessing.

On the morrow all was quiet in Florence. It was Palm Sunday. What memories must have come to Savonarola as he heard the monks chanting that morning, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." He had made much of Palm Sunday all through the years of his supremacy in the pulpit. His sermon on this day was in the Church of San Marco. It was the last sermon he ever preached. His message was sad and brief. He solemnly offered his body as a sacrifice to God, and declared his readiness to suffer death for the good of his people. With the sublime composure of one who had fought a good fight and

kept the faith, he bade farewell to his people, well knowing that he was speaking to them for the last time. After pronouncing the benediction of peace, he went back to his cell, and was again alone with his God.

Later in the day, at Vesper time, the Compagnacci, breaking the sullen calm which had oppressed the city from morning until now, created a disturbance at the Duomo where one of the friars of San Marco was to preach. Stones and insolence met the Piagnoni who came to hear the sermon.

"Our turn has come now!" fiercely snapped the Compagnacci. "No sermon to-day!" Swords flashed, and then the riot began. Their work done at the Duomo, the Compagnacci shouted, "To San Marco! To San Marco! Fire in hand!" The opportunity for which they had waited had come, and with ruffian delight they improved it. Waiting only to gather a crowd, they slashed their way to San Marco. More than one of the Piagnoni lay dead behind them. "Twist necks" and "prayer mumblers" would get it now! Some with swords stained with blood, others grasping guns or carrying sticks, and still others with their hands filled with stones, they pushed and crowded into the Piazza of San Marco, yelling their wild threats, hooting at shrieking women, tearing their way toward the man who had reproved their evil doings and denounced their crimes. Finding the church still well filled with people who had remained in prayer after vespers, they pelted them with stones, and struck right and left at those who tried to escape. The doors of the church and convent were

quickly barred. Then the mob yelled their wrath outside.

Some of the friars, and certain citizens devoted to San Marco, fearing what might happen, had concealed a store of arms, without the knowledge of Savonarola. They had breast-plates, helmets, halberds, cross-bows, shields, four or five arquebusses, and two small cannon. Lucca della Robbia was in the company, and Fra Benedetto; Francesco Valori was also there. When Savonarola saw the friars with helmits on, and breast-plates over their robes, brandishing great halberds, and shouting *"Viva Gesu Christo!"* he was deeply grieved, and at once implored and commanded that all attempts at defense should cease. "Do not stain your hands in blood; do not disobey the precepts of the Gospel, nor your superior's commands." Thus he cried with a loud voice. Only a few heard him. The mob were attacking the gates, and their furious yells shut out all else.

Savonarola now put on his priestly robes, and with cross in hand approached the gate to deliver himself to his enemies, saying to his companions, "Suffer me to go forth, since through me this tempest has arisen." But friars and citizens protested that he would be torn to pieces, and begged him not to leave them. "What," they said, "will become of us without you?" Failing to persuade them, he bade all follow him into the church. "Prayer," he said to the friars, "is the only weapon to be employed by a minister of the Gospel." Kneeling in the choir of the church with those who had

followed him, he led them in intoning the chant, "O Lord, save Thy people!"

Some two hours before sundown, the mace-bearers came to the monastery to announce a decree of the Signory just enacted: that all in the monastery were to lay down arms; that Savonarola was sentenced to exile; and that he must be out of Florentine territory within twelve hours' time. Many could not believe the message. How could the Signory order men who were defending their own property to lay down arms, and do nothing to the mob outside? It was unthinkable! But that was the decree. The mace-bearers had delivered the message as instructed. Some now left the monastry to defend their own homes, and to gather reinforcements for San Marco. Among them was Valori. He was let down over the rear wall. On reaching his home he found it surrounded by enemies; saw his wife brutally murdered before his eyes; and then, pushing his way toward the Palace to answer a summons of the Signory, he was struck by a Tornabuoni sword and killed instantly. His house was sacked and burned. Many others suffered the same fate.

It was a Compagnacci night. The "Bad Men" of the Arrabbiati revelled in fire and blood until they sank down exhausted. The attack on San Marco became more desperate as night deepened, until finally the walls were scaled, and the mob entered. They had been held back so long that frenzy had now reached its limit. With torch and sword they made their way through the cloisters, sacking rooms on all sides, entering the cells to

smear and scorch with their torches some of the most beautiful of Fra Angelico's frescoes. Then they broke open the door of the choir where the friars were praying. Thus suddenly surprised, the friars seized anything within reach, and rushed upon their assailants. It was a strange sight! Crosses, torches, and halberds all in the air at once! The great bell of the convent sounded an alarm, and the struggle was on in earnest. Villari tells a thrilling story of the daring and heroism of these friars in defending their monastery; how Baldo Inghirlami and Francesco Davanzati dealt vigorous blows; how Luca della Robbia chased the foes through the cloister, sword in hand; how Fra Benedetto and a few associates mounted the roof, and repeatedly drove back the enemy with a furious hail of stones and tiles; how several of the monks fired their muskets with good results; and how a certain Fra Enrico, a young, fair-haired, handsome German, particularly distinguished himself by his prowess; swinging a great halberd, he accompanied each stroke, as it fell upon the back of a rioter, with the words, *"O Lord, save Thy people!"*

With complete victory in sight, the defenders were smiting vigorously right and left to clear the monastery of the last invader, when another edict came from the Signory, declaring all to be rebels who did not forsake the convent within an hour. It was evident now that the Signory was determined to crush San Marco as well as its Prior. Savonarola still remained, with a few others, in the choir of the church where they continued in prayer and praise. A little later another decree came, and

this a threatening one, commanding Savonarola, Fra Dominico and Fra Silvestro to present themselves at the Palace without delay. Dominico demanded that the decree should be brought in writing. When it finally came, and in proper form, Savonarola gathered his brother friars about him, and spoke a parting message. Simple words, but memorable. "My beloved children, in the presence of God, in the presence of the consecrated wafer, with our enemies already in the convent, I confirm the truth of my doctrine. All that I have said hath come to me from God, and He is my witness in heaven that I speak no lie. I had not foreseen that all the city would turn so quickly against me, nevertheless, may the Lord's will be done. My last exhortation to you is this: Let faith, prayer, and patience be your weapons. I leave you with anguish and grief to give myself into mine enemy's hands. I do not know whether they will take my life, but certain am I that once dead I shall be able to succor you in heaven far better than it hath been granted me to help on earth. Take comfort, embrace the cross, and by it you shall find the way of salvation."

It was one o'clock in the morning when the mace-bearers came from the Signory with the decree of arrest properly signed. Before leaving the monastery Savonarola spoke this one parting word to the broken-hearted friars: "My brethren, take heed not to doubt. The work of the Lord shall go forward without cease, and my death will but hasten it on." The mob were so intoxicated with ghoulish glee when they saw the prisoner that

the officers of the Signory had difficulty in saving him from their clutches. They flashed lanterns in his face and sneered, "Behold the true light!" A human cur twisted one of his fingers and tauntingly hissed, "Turn the key, prophet!" But enough. It was a mob at its worst. That tells the whole story. Brought before the Gonfaloniere, the prisoners were assigned to their cells. Savonarola was taken to a little room high up in the bell-tower of the old Palace. Strange coincidence! In this very cell Cosimo de' Medici, father of Lorenzo the Magnificent, had once been a prisoner.

The Signory immediately notified Rome of what had happened. They sent messages to Milan and to other courts. In the message to Rome they instructed their envoy to obtain from the pope absolution from all the censure they might have incurred in tolerating Savonarola's sermons, and later for having laid violent hands on ecclesiastics. They asked permission to sit in judgment on Savonarola and his associates in crime, and in closing requested the envoy to ask his Holiness for a speedy settlement of the question of Church taxes, which had long been vexing them. It was a happy message the pope sent in reply. Full absolution was granted and the papal benediction. They were given authority to examine and try the prisoners and also to put them to torture. The Signory were praised for all they had done, and plenary indulgence was sent for the Easter octave in the Duomo. Letters of hearty congratulation came from the Duke of Milan, and he promised the speedy surrender of Pisa. But of all the tidings

which brought cheer to the enemies of Savonarola none compared with a message from France announcing the death of Charles VIII. He had died on the 7th of April, the very day of the ordeal of fire. Savonarola's one strong political friend was thus taken from him in the hour of his greatest need. Earth offered no further hope for him. Shut up in a dungeon, his enemies masters of Florence, the Compagnacci busy with plans to complete the overthrow of the Piagnoni, he well knew that he was in his enemy's hands and that no mercy would be shown. Preliminary preparations were made for the trial by holding a *Pratica,* in which was discussed the mode and place of examination, and the court before which the distinguished prisoner should be tried.

It was soon evident that customs, and even laws, would be set aside in order to secure the certain and speedy condemnation of the man who had done more for the liberties of Florence than all others of the century in which he lived. New councils of the Ten and the Eight were elected and instructed to sit with the men who were actually in office. On the 11th of April a Commission of seventeen examiners was appointed to conduct the trial of the three friars. In the list of the seventeen composing the comission there were some of the bitterest enemies Savonarola had; among them Dolfo Spini, the most ferociously vindictive of them all. With such a Commission nobody had any doubt as to what would be the outcome of the trial. The day after the arrest Savonarola was taken to a hall in the Bargello where the examination was

to begin. All the questions centered about three points,—his religious teaching, his political conduct, and his prophecies. In all the examinations and tortures it was made clear to the examiners that on the first two points they could find nothing against him. It was only at the point of his prophecies that he showed any weakness at all.

Perhaps a word ought to be said just here with reference to Savonarola's claim to prophetic gifts. It will be remembered that from the beginning of his public ministry he saw visions, in which it seemed to him that God actually spoke to him and gave him a message for the people. The word which he proclaimed was not his word but God's word. This he said over and over again. More than once, too, he foretold events which actually came to pass. There were two notable instances, however, in which he failed. First, in the case of Charles VIII, whom he described as the scourge of God, who would punish the princes of Italy and be the means of regenerating the Church. This Charles did not do. And because he did not do it Savonarola prophesied that woes would come upon him. And they did come. The royal heart of Charles was filled with bitter grief at the untimely death of the Dauphin; and his own sudden and ignominious death was spoken of, even by so worldly-minded a man as De Comines, as an apparent fulfillment of the prophecies which he had read in letters addressed to King Charles, and which he had actually heard from the lips of Savonarola himself. The second notable failure was in the prophecy that he would "turn the key," and

that the princes of the nations would rise up to depose Alexander, and adopt means for the reformation of the Church.

What shall be said of this claim to prophetic gifts? Nothing perhaps except this, that in some instances Savonarola failed to distinguish between human discernment of the inevitable results of a course of action and direct, immediate revelation. Many of his so-called prophecies were utterances for which he never claimed any supernatural illumination. Others bear all the marks of real prophecy, as much so as anything to be found in the Old Testament. It is not claimed here that they were prophecies of this class, but it may be asserted that this explanation of them offers as few difficulties in interpretation as any other which has been suggested. But we are coming to understand in these later days that the prophet of God is not primarily one who foretells future events. In fact the power to foretell is almost the smallest thing about the prophet. The prophet is a discerner rather than a foreteller. Measured by the standards of our own time, and making due allowance for a mystical tendency in his thinking, there is little to criticise in Savonarola's prophecies. He himself often said that he did not certainly know to what extent God had vouchsafed to him the power to forsee what would happen for the glory or shame of the Church. But the examiners saw their opportunity and pushed their questions at the point of the prophecies; and when questions would not do they tried torture; then they questioned again, and then again went back to the torture.

Pico della Mirandola has given a minute account of the horrible punishment of torture which Savonarola suffered. It is almost too bad to print, and would not be written down here, but that some, forsooth, count it much against Savonarola that he said some things under torture which he denied afterwards, and would never have said except in the delirium of excruciating pain. Pico's story of the torture is this: "His hands were bound behind his back with the strongest chains. They were then tied to a rope attached to the roof of the building, by which he was first drawn up to a great height, and then let fall with great violence, so that his feet did not quite touch the ground; and his body, remaining suspended in the air, sprang upwards again, so that his shoulders were put out of joint and his muscles strained and torn. Instruments of torture were set before his eyes. Insults were heaped upon him; he was struck and spit upon, his torturers demanding all the time that he should recant his prophecies and disavow his pretensions to be a messenger of God. Burning coals were then applied to his feet, so that the flesh and nerves were half burned, in order that he might be induced to retract. He refused to do so. Again and again they repeated the torture, and he repeated his innocence, crying out with the prophet Elijah, 'O Lord, take away my life.' When the torture was over and he was led back to his cell, he immediately knelt down and prayed in the words of Christ, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"

How often the torture was applied is not known,

but again, and again, and again, the frail body was racked and bruised and burned. Under continued torture he spoke incoherently at times, and was not clear about the prophecies; but there is every reason for believing that Villari is right in maintaining that throughout the whole course of the trial Savonarola was consistent with his real self. What the torturer could not do, the Signory tried to accomplish by employing an unscrupulous notary, one Ser Ceccone, to so revise the report of the trial that they might have some reason for putting the man to death. After the first series of examinations, part of the report of the trial was published; but the indignation of the people against the Signory was so great that every copy was ordered suppressed. A subsequent edition did not make the case of the Signory much better.

A second trial was begun on the 21st of April with new examinations, new torture, new revising and altering of testimony; but the result was no better. It is said the Signory was so poorly pleased with the result that they gave Ceccone only thirty ducats, instead of the four hundred promised, on the ground that he had not made out a case for them. "Thirty pieces of silver," then, was all this unscrupulous notary had for his bad work. Alas! Judas, others have sinned thy sin!

There was a month now before the coming of the papal commissioners from Rome. All this time Savonarola sat in his narrow cell in the Palace tower. His right arm, which had been saved from the torture in order that he might sign his testimony, he could now use for writing. It speaks

much for the moral greatness and heroism of the man that, in these thirty days, he did not write one word in self-defense, not a word against his judges, not a complaint against any of his enemies! His thoughts were given wholly to God and his own personal relation to Him.

Savonarola achieved, during this month in the little cell in the Palace tower, one of the greatest victories of his life. He wrote a Miserere and an Exposition of the Thirtieth Psalm. The Miserere was widely published after his death, and in a remarkably short space of time ran through thirteen separate editions. Both were republished by Martin Luther at Strassburg. In the preface Luther declared that Savonarola was a precurser of the Protestant doctrine, and one of the martyrs of the Reformation. "This man," said he, "was put to death solely for having desired that some one should come to purify the slough of Rome."

Two brief passages from these writings are all that space will allow. The first is from the Miserere: "But when Thy spirit shall descend upon me, when Christ shall live within me; then shall I be saved. Strengthen me in Thy spirit, O Lord; not until then, can I teach Thy ways to the wicked. Hadst thou asked the sacrifice of my body, I would have given it ere now; but burnt offerings are as naught to Thee; Thou wouldst have the offering of the spirit. Therefore, O sinner, bring thy repentant heart unto the Lord, naught else shall be required of thee."

The following is from the Exposition of the Thirtieth Psalm: "Who is he that putteth bounds

to the mercy of God, and thinketh to bear the waters of the ocean in his hands? Hast thou not heard the Lord say: 'When the sinner repenteth and turneth away from his sins, I will no more remember his iniquities.' God's mercy is boundless. Didst thou fall, rise up, and mercy shall receive thee. Wast thou ruined, cry, and mercy shall come to thee."

At the end of the thirty days the papal commissioners came. Francesco Romolino was one of them; a brutish man, but a faithful servant of Alexander, well known afterwards as Cardinal Romolino. "We shall make a fine bonfire," said he, "I bear the sentence with me already prepared." On the following morning, May the 20th, the third trial began. The examiners were on hand, and the torturers. The papal commissioners were there, and well supported by chosen representatives of the municipality. Ceccone was given help this time. Men who would be spurs to his wits acted as his assistants. The trial was substantially the same as the others, except that Romolino's menaces and furious threatenings added to the grewsomeness of the scene. Perhaps, too, there were more legal irregularities in this third trial. At the close of the second day Romolino commanded Savonarola to appear before him the following morning to receive his sentence. The calm reply was, "I am a prisoner. I will come if my jailers bring me."

It is said that when the messengers entered Savonarola's cell to announce his sentence they found him kneeling in prayer. He looked up only long enough to receive their message, and then calmly went on with his praying. Jacobo Nic-

colini, representing a brotherhood organized for the purpose of ministering to the condemned during the last hours of life, came into the cell and asked Savonarola if there was anything he desired. He had one request, that he might have a brief interview with his two brother prisoners, Fra Domenico and Fra Silvestro, whom he had not seen for forty days. After much hesitation, the Signory gave permission.

The interview took place in the hall of the Great Council. How strange that the Signory should have fixed upon this place for the meeting! The "Hall of the Five Hundred," as it was commonly called, was where the Great Council met, the council for which Savonarola had pleaded so earnestly—"A council after the pattern of the Venetians;" and the hall itself was so grand and spacious! It was Savonarola who had urged that it should be built. He even offered to send workmen from the Duomo to hasten the work. The Italy of to-day, and the world, blesses that Signory for fixing upon the hall of the Great Council, as the place where Savonarola should spend at least one hour of his last night on earth with his two brothers who were to go with him on the morrow to the scaffold.

We know little of what took place in that meeting. Nor ought we care to know. Domenico and Silvestro had both been told that their master had denied the faith, and confessed to having preached false doctrines. The moment they looked into his face they knew it was all a lie. In the early morning they met again to receive the sacrament, Savonarola officiating. On raising the host he de-

clared his faith in the following confession: "O Lord, I acknowledge Thee to be the perfect, infinite Trinity, the three in one, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; I acknowledge Thee to be the eternal Word; and that Thou didst descend into Mary's womb, and didst mount the cross to shed thy blood for our sins. I pray Thee that by Thy blood I may gain remission of my sins, I implore Thee to forgive them; and likewise to grant Thy pardon for every offense or hurt brought on this city; for every error I may have unwittingly committed." He was ready now for the scaffold.

He who has never been in Florence on a May morning can have little conception of its beauty and glory. Nature decked in robes of royalty, fragrant air, soft skies, gorgeous sunshine washing domes and campaniles, and bringing out the beauty of stately church and splendid palace! It was on such a morning, that the inhabitants of Florence gathered in the spacious square in front of the old Palace to witness the burning of their prophet. A raised scaffold led from near the door of the Palace to the place of the gibbet. The fagots were piled up for the flame.

From all the streets the people had gathered. The Piazza was thronged. The buildings on all sides were crowded, every window was filled with living human faces. The roofs were loaded with eager spectators. Men were crouching in the cornices of the buildings, and hanging in the iron torch rings of the surrounding walls. Never before had been seen in the Piazza such a multitude! Some were there with angry look, thirsting only for blood. Their mad yells were the cries of wild

beasts or devils rather than men. Some with doubtful expression on their faces simply waited for the end of the tragedy. Some were there from long vigils; with red eyes and haggard look they trembled at the approach of the fatal moment! Others calmly waited for some superhuman intervention, some flash from heaven, which should strike down this mad conspiracy and vindicate their prophet. The officials who were to occupy the tribunals walked slowly to their places of responsibility. The hour had struck, and in all the Piazza there was a dull painful silence.

There in the door of the Palace stood Savonarola. His two friends, Domenico and Silvestro, were on either side. Silvestro had shown weakness in the trial, but was calm now. Domenico, true hero and faithful friend, looked towards the gibbet with the face of a conqueror. At the beginning of the ceremony Savonarola's robe was taken from him. "O sacred habit," he said as they took it, "how much I desired thee! By the grace of God thou wast granted to me; and I have preserved thee unstained to this moment. Now I do not abandon thee, but thou art taken from me." At the first tribunal, the bishop, stumbling over the formula he was loath to pronounce, said with much emotion, "I separate thee from the Church militant —and—and—from the Church triumphant." "From the Church militant," quickly replied Savonarola; "thou canst do that, but thou hast no power to separate me from the Church triumphant." They were led now to the second tribunal, where stood the papal commissioners, and then taken by the officers to the third tribunal, to receive sentence.

The form of sentence pronounced by the Signory was this: "The Gonfaloniere and the Eight, having well considered the trials of the three friars, and the enormous crimes which they revealed, and especially having considered the sentence of the pope, which consigns them to the secular tribunal for punishment, decree that each one of the three friars shall be hanged on the cross, and then burned, in order that their souls may be entirely separated from their bodies." The sentence pronounced, there was nothing now but to be led to the executioner. With calm face and steady step, whispering the great Credo, Savonarola walked without flinching to the place of death!

There was but one thing more for the magistrates of Florence to do, write their dispatches of the day's proceedings. It was a welcome message they sent to Alexander. Florence had done his bidding, and was ready for his congratulations and benediction. Mariano was assured that the revenge he had so long hoped for had come at last, the "parable monger" would trouble him no more. The Arrabbiati might open their taverns and their theaters, and fill their processions with the wildest orgies. No one would now rebuke their midnight revels. All who had taken part in this mad plot of death might come together for as much carnival rioting as they liked. The voice of the preacher was still, and the prophet had been forever silenced.

It was a sad business. Florence would bitterly repent of it. "The martyr's soul went out in fire," because an immoral pope wanted it so. And the magistrates of Florence said, "So it shall be."

They did not know then, poor deluded principals in this crime; they did not know that the day would come when men would know their names only as they know Pilate's name, through the part they took in the killing of an innocent man.

O Florence! How couldst thou do it? Why didst thou not strike down his traducers and save him? He was a true prophet of thy glory and thy greatness! Again, O Florence! City of Dante and of Michael Angelo! Again! Again! How couldst thou do it? Let a modern put words into the mouth of one of thy noblest citizens as he turns his face from that tragic scene of death:

"Finished is thy kingdom,—weighed in the balance,—
Weighed and found wanting,—given to the Medes
and Persians!
Thou shalt explore a lone, a lifeless gulf;
Ghosts of thy great shall haunt thee, and thy stones
Majestically mock thy fallen pride;
Yea, as a king who buys ignoble peace,
Crouching, a slave, among ancestral vaults,
So shalt thou be, O Florence:—dead thy freedom,
Perished thy crafts; and if there yet endure
One voice, one seeing eye, one plastic brain,
The offspring of our honorable years,
Doomed to outlive the cataclysmal age,
Hardly his soul shall fashion, hardly sing,
Save but 'mid pillared loneliness to mourn,
Crooning in stone, the swan song of our Fate;
Dawn, Day and Dusk and Night one vasty tomb;
Dawn that saith, "Wake me not;" Day tired of toil;
Dusk glad because of sleep; and Night—ah night!
When shalt thou rise, my Italy, my land?
Grateful is slumber; happiest he, God wot,
Who sleeps in stone while shame and woe endure!"

CHAPTER XIX.

INFLUENCE ON LATER TIMES.

A FEW mornings after the tragedy in the Piazza, women were seen kneeling in prayer at the spot where the fire had burned their prophet. This was not the first sign that the memory of Savonarola would be honored in Florence. Before the sun had set on the day of the burning, ladies from the first families of the city, disguised as servants, gathered ashes and charred pieces of wood from the place of the gibbet to preserve them as precious mementos and sacred relics.

On the anniversary of this martyrdom, for more than two hundred years, that place where stood the gibbet was strewn with the whitest lilies and the most fragrant roses that grow in the valley of the Arno. Ten years after the cruel murder of Savonarola in Florence, the great Raphael painted his portrait in Rome, and in the very halls of the Vatican. In thirty years Michael Angelo, inspired by what he heard in the Duomo, bravely built a stout fortress on San Miniato to defend the Republic against the combined powers of pope and Cæsar, and in tottering age this same Angelo was wont to read the sermons of the great Prior of San Marco, and talk of the life and character of the statesman-preacher. Strangest of all, Alexander himself seemed to repent of his participa-

tion in the bloody matter, and permitted all the writings of Savonarola to be printed, and scattered broadcast, without challenge.

In recent years, and mainly through men of widely different religious views, Dominican monks on the one side and ardent Protestants on the other, there has been a remarkable revival of interest in Savonarola and his work. Protestants have pointed out, influenced in part, no doubt, by the strong words of Martin Luther, that Savonarola deserves a place among the great reformers in the Protestant movement which had its beginning in the fifteenth century. They hold that when we speak of John Wyclif and his heroic work in England and of John Huss and what he did and suffered in Bohemia, we ought also to speak, and very clearly and emphatically, too, of Girolamo Savonarola as the man who more than any other, and more than all others combined, gave a moral and a spiritual tone and character to the Renaissance.

Good Catholics have pointed to the fact that Pope Benedict XIV wrote Savonarola's name with honorable mention in his list of saints and holy men, and that many who truly hold the Catholic faith, some of them since canonized, have read his writing with delight and profit. The Dominican monks have presented urgent petitions to the Holy See praying that he be made a saint. At least twice it has been expected by some of them that their request would be granted. It is probably too late now for this to be brought about, yet a Catholic historian has risen up in England to say,

"I consider him the great Christian hero of the fifteenth century." Cardinal Newman, though he admired the man, was of the opinion that the work of Savonarola belonged to his own time only. It is not so. The mighty preacher of Florence is exercising a potent influence to-day in all the forward movements of the Christian Church. Catholics and Protestants alike, in England and America, are feeling the throb and influence of his mighty life.

This age in which we live, then, bears abundant testimony to the pure life and worthy work of the great Prior of San Marco. A little more than a generation ago the cry rang out in our Northern civilization, "Italy is free! On both sides of the Apennines; from Sicily to the Alps; free in her schools and press, in her Church and her State; and the Protestant Bible is being sold under the shadow of the Vatican!" Many now living remember what a thrill of joy ran through the Protestantism of our country when the wires brought the message.

When the sons of liberty, in regenerated Italy, began building their monuments for Mazzini and Cavour, Garibaldi and Victor Immanuel, they remembered also the earlier heroes and martyrs of Italian freedom. Then it was they formed the marble and fashioned the bronze, for Arnoldo and Bruno, Dante and Galileo, Michael Angelo, and Savonarola. In Ferrara, under the shadow of that "grim quadrangular building with its four massive towers," Galetti has raised the marble form of the preacher with arms extended to plead for principles of liberty. In the Prior's cell in San Marco,

speaking bronze and purest Carrara unite to present the face and form of the prophet once degraded but now honored. And in the Hall of the Five Hundred in Florence, the hall of the Great Council, where assembled under Victor Immanuel the first free parliament of united Italy, there now stands, in heroic marble, the most conspicuous figure in that mighty hall, the statesman-preacher, Savonarola. He is still speaking to Florence! His left hand rests on the marzocco; his right holds aloft the old crucifix, while his eyes flash with impassioned love of liberty. Thus the civilization of to-day honors its prophet of yesterday. England has given him first place in her greatest fiction, Germany has built him into her poetry and her history and given him honorable place by the side of her heroic Luther, France and Italy have contributed of their best biographers to perpetuate his memory and his fame.

Alexander and Mariano attempted too much in Florence. Libertines and tyrants often do that. They thought they had silenced their man, when they burned him on that May morning, and dumped his ashes into the Arno. The Arno had not borne its precious cargo to the blue waters of the Mediterranean before those ashes were caught up in the mists which rose from the valley of beauty, and floated back to descend in fertilizing showers which should prepare the soil of Italy and Europe for a new and better civilization. Did a profligate pope and a scheming Signory think they could silence such a man as this? A man whose moral and spiritual leadership had been recognized

by all Florence as the mightiest the city had ever known? Did they think that? If they did, let their shades know this: that Bruneleschi's dome shall break in falling fragments, and Arnolfo's palace of strength be scattered to the winds; that the Arno shall cease to run, and the strong foundations of Fiesole and San Miniato crumble to dust, before his voice—the mightiest voice Florence ever heard—shall be still. That voice, speaking out for purity, liberty, and justice, will never be silent.

It has been asked why Savonarola did not accomplish what Martin Luther did in Germany and John Knox in Scotland? Luther and Knox would have gone to their death in Italy had they attempted there their work under Alexander VI. The time was one of mortal combat between the old and the new, and in it all Savonarola was prophet of the new. This speaks volumes for the clearness of his vision and the greatness of his personality.

If Savonarola did not shake off all the old, his face was ever towards the future and his eye fixed on reformation. Had he lived twenty years later he would have protested against the shameless barter in indulgences as stoutly as did Martin Luther. Whether his work of reform would have continued within the mother Church, or in separation from it, we can not tell. It is enough to know that he served well the age in which he lived. Preacher of purity! Advocate of justice! Apostle of liberty! We shall not say too much if we borrow the words of his favorite pupil Bartolomeo, and call him *"A Prophet of God."*

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